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THE

MOSAIC WORKERS;

A

TALE OF VENICE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF GEORGE SAND.

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INTRODUCTION.

You reproach me, my child, for always telling you tales with a mournful ending; or else stories, so long, so long, that slumber comes in the sweetest part. Think you, little one, that your old father can always have laughing thoughts, after so rude a winter; after a spring so pale, so cold, so rheumatismal? Whilst the sad north-wind moans through our old fir-trees, whilst the crane utters her cry of distress at the sound of the Angelus, saluting the pale and icy dawn, my thoughts are only of blood and mourning. Livid spectres dance around my fading lamp, and I rise in anxiety to drive them from your couch. But the time is no more, when children believed in spectres. You smile when we relate to you the terrors and superstitions which encircled our infancy; those legends of haunting spirits, which kept us waking and trembling in our beds till the dreary sound of Matins, lull you to peaceful sleep in your cradles. It is then a story quite simple, quite natural, which you wish for, young sceptic? I will endeavour to recall one which the Abbe Panorio related to Beppa, during my stay at Venice. He was of your opinion as to stories. He was satiated with the fantastic; and the confessions of old devotees had given him a horror for sorcerers and visions. He was, besides, but little inclined to the sentimental. The tender passions of romance seemed to him extremely wearisome; but, like you, he felt interested in the reveries of lovers of nature; in the labours and tribulations of artists. His tales had always a foundation of historical reality; and, if they sometimes made us sad, they always inculcated a useful moral, or a consoling truth.

One beautiful summer night, by the full soft light of the moon of the oriental seas, seated under a flowery trellis, enjoying the sweet odour of the vine, and the jasmine, we were supping gaily, about midnight, in the gardens of Santa-Margarita. Our party consisted of Assem Zuzuf, an honest merchant of Corcyra, Signor Lelio, first singer at the theatre of La Fenice, the doctor Acroceronius, the charming Beppa, and the handsome Abbe Panorio. A nightingale was singing in its leafy cage, suspended from the trellis which sheltered our table; whilst the ices went round, Beppa tuned her lute, and sang with a voice even more melodious than that of the nightingale. The jealous bird often interrupted her with a precipitate roulade, a furious burst of melody, or lyrical declamation; then we extinguished the tapers, and the nightingale ceased its song, whilst the moon shed pale sapphires and glancing diamonds over the crystal and silver vases spread before us. The waves broke in the distance with a voluptuous sound upon the flowery shore; and the wind brought to our ears, from time to time, the slow and monotonous recitative of the gondolier:

> Intanto la bella Erminia fugge, etc.

Then the Abbe spoke of the bright days of the republic, and the illustrious deeds of the times of his country's power and glory; or he would take a pleasure in recalling her hours of show and splendour. Although but young, the Abbe knew more of the history of Venice than the oldest of her citizens. He had studied it in her monuments and records with the study of love. He delighted to seek in the popular traditions, details of the lives of great artists One day *apropos* of Titian and Tintoretto, he told us the incidents I will now endeavour to recall, if the soft wind which waves our willows, and the lark singing on high her song of ecstasy, are not interrupted by the storm blast; and if the spring breeze, which half opens the buds of our indolent roses, and which warms my heart, will deign to breathe over us until to-morrow morning.

THE MOSAIC WORKERS.

CHAPTER I.

"BELIEVE me, Messer Jacopo, I am an unfortunate father. Nothing can console me for this disgrace. We live in a declining age, and it is I who say so. The human race is degenerating. The spirit of good government is fading away in families. In my time, every one used to try at least to equal, if not to surpass his ancestors. Now, so long as a fortune can be obtained, no matter how, no one objects to any degree of self derogation. The noble becomes a merchant, the master a journeyman, the architect a mason, and the mason a mere labourer.—Holy Virgin where will this end ?"

So spoke Messer Sebastian Zuccato, a painter, who, though now forgotten, was then highly esteemed as the founder of a school of painting, to the illustrious master, Jacques Robusti, better known now under the name of Tintoretto.

"Ah! Ah!" answered the master, who from habitual absence of mind, often answered with an excess of sincerity, "it is much better to be a good workman than a mediocre master; a great artisan, than a vulgar artist."

"Stop, stop, my good master," cried old Zuccato, a little piqued; "whom are you styling a vulgar artist, a mediocre painter?—the syndic of all the painters, the master of so many masters, who make the present glory of Venice, and form a sublime constellation, in which you yourself are one of the bright particular stars, but where my pupil Tiziana Vecelli shines with no less lustre."

"Very well, Messer Sebastian," answered Tintoretto, coolly; "if such stars and such constellations enlighten the republic, if your school produces such masters, commencing by the sublime Titian, before whom I bow without jealousy, and without resentment, we cannot be living in such a declining age as you were mourning over just now."

"Well, well," said the sorrowful old man, a little impatiently; "no doubt we live in a grand age for the fine arts. But I can never console myself for having contributed to its grandeur, and being the last to enjoy it. What avails it to me, to have educated a Titian if no one cares for it? Who will even know it a hundred years hence? Even now it is only known through this great man's gratitude, who is always praising me, and calls me his dear comrade. But what is that even?—Why did it not please heaven to make me Titian's father? why he is not a Zuccato, or I a Vecelli? Then at least my name would have lived from age to age, and perhaps a thousand years hence, the world would have said: 'The first of this name was an excellent master.' Whilst now, I have two sons as careless of the honour of my name, as they are faithless to the noble muses; two sons, who, with their brilliant capacities, might have been my glory, might perhaps have surpassed Giorgione, Schiavone, the Bellinis, Paul Veronese, Titian, and Tintoretto himself . . . . Yes, I am not afraid of saying that, with their natural talent, and the instruction which even in my old age I could give them, they might even now wipe off their dishonour, quit the workman's ladder, and mount the painter's scaffold. My dear master, you must give me another proof of the friendship with which you honour me, by joining your entreaties to those of Titian, in order to produce some effect on my misguided children. If you would but save Francesco he would influence his brother, for Valerio is a young man of no judgment, and I should say, were he not my son, almost without talent, if he had not occasionally shown some when sketching fresco borders on the walls of my studio. But Checo is quite another being, he handles the brush like a master, and often suggests to the painters themselves those lofty conceptions which they, which even you, Messer Jacopo, as you have often told me, only execute. Besides, he is acute, active, persevering, restless, ambitious; he has all the qualities of an artist. I cannot imagine how he can so completely have mistaken his vocation.

"I will do as you wish," answered Tintoretto, "but first I will tell you my honest opinion as to your anger against your sons' profession. Mosaic is not, what you style it, an ignoble trade, but a true art brought from Greece by skilful masters. It is an art of which we ought to speak with great respect, for it, and it alone, has preserved to us even more completely than painting on metals, the otherwise lost traditions of the state of design in the lower empire. If it has transcribed them in an altered and doubtful shape, it is not the less true that, without it, we should have lost them entirely. Canvass cannot withstand the ravages of time. Apelles and Zeuxis have left but their names. What gratitude should we not now feel to any generous artist, who had eternized their works by the aid of marble and crystal. Besides, the mosaic art has preserved to us entire the traditions of colouring, and on this point, far from being inferior to painting, it has an undeniable superiority,—it resists the encroachments of time, as well as the injuries of the atmosphere."

"Pray why, if it resists them all so well," said Zuccato hastily, "is the senate obliged to repair all the dome of St. Mark, which now is as bare as my head?"

"Because at the time when those mosaics were done, Greek artists were rare at Venice, they came from a distance, stayed only a short time, and left the finish of their compositions to hastily instructed apprentices, who executed them without knowing their trade well, and who could not give their works the necessary solidity. Now, when the art has been cultivated for some ages we Venetians have become as skilful as the Greeks ever were, and the works of your son Francesco will go down to posterity, and his name will be blessed for having traced those unalterable frescos on the walls of our cathedral; the canvass on which Titian and Veronese have painted their *chef-d'œuvre* will fall to pieces, and a day will come when our greatest masters will only be remembered through the mosaics of the Zuccati."

"It follows then," said the obstinate old man, "that Scarpo, my shoemaker, is a far greater artist than the deity; for my foot, though the work of Divinity, will fall to dust, whilst my shoes may keep for ages the form and impress of my foot."

"But the colour! Messer Sebastian, the colour! your comparison is worth nothing. What substance worked by the hand of man can keep the colour of your flesh for an unlimited period? whilst marble and metal, being primitive and imperishable substances, will retain even to their last grain of dust, the Venetian colouring, the finest in the world, and before which Buonarotti and all his Florentine school must lower their flag. No, no, you are in error, Messer Sebastian and you are unjust if you do not rather say, Honour to the engraver, preserver, and propagator of pure outline —Honour to the Mosaist, guardian and preserver of colour?"

"Your humble servant," said the old man, "thanks for your good advice, but for all that I beg you will inscribe my name upon my tombstone with the word 'Painter,' that it may not be forgotten by the next year that there was one of my name who handled the paint brush and not the trowel."

"But, Messer Sebastain," said the good master detaining him, "you have not even seen the last performances of your sons in the interior of the cathedral."

"God forbid that I should see Francesco and Valerio Zuccato hoisted by ropes like slaters, cutting enamel and working mastic."

"But you know, my good Sebastian, that these works have obtained the highest eulogiums from the Senate, and very high recompense from the republic."

"I know well," replied the old man, haughtily, "that there is mounted on the ladders of the cathedral of Saint Mark, a young man who is my eldest son, and who for one hundred ducates a-year has abandoned the noble profession of his fathers, in spite of the reproaches of his conscience and the conflicts of his pride. I know also that the pavements of Venice are trodden by my second son, who to pay for his foolish pleasures and expences has given up all pride, and actually takes wages from his own brother, and only quits the too extravagant dress of dissipation for the too humble apron of the workman, spending his evenings, playing the partrician in a gondola, and working the next day like a journeyman mason, to pay for the supper and serenade of the past evening. This is what I know, Messer, and nothing but this—"

"And I tepeat to you, Messer Sebastian," replied Tintoretto, "that you have two good and noble children, who are excellent artists, one industrious, patient, ingenious, excellent, exact, allowed by all to be a master of his art, whilst the other is amiable, brave, and jovial, full of spirit and fire, less assiduous in his employment, but perhaps even more fruitful in grand ideas and sublime conceptions."

"Oh, yes," replied the old man, "and yet more fruitful in words. I have had enough to do with those theorizers, who *feel art* as they call it, who explain it, define it, and exhalt it, but do not work for it; they are the nuisance of the studios, they make the noise whilst others do the work. They think themselves of far too noble a race to work, or else they have so much talent they don't know how to use it; the mere inspiration kills them, and in order not to be too much worn out by it, they chatter about art, or walk the streets from morning to night—apparently it is from the fear, least the inspiration of art and the work of his hands should injure his health, that Messer Valerio my son, instead of working with his ten fingers lets all his intellect out by his lips. That boy has always made the same impression upon me that a canvass would, on which the first ideas of many subjects were sketched without any of them being effaced, and which thus in short time would present the strange spectacle of a multitude of incoherent lines, each of which may have had some intention at first, but which the artist, at last lost in his own chaos, has never been able to resume or follow out."

"I own Valerio is a little dissipated, and tolerably idle," replied the master; "I must admonish him again, in virtue of the paternal authority which he has himself yielded me, by betrothing himself to my little Marietta."

"And do you still suffer that pleasantry?" said the old painter, trying to disguise the secret pleasure of this information, confirmed by the mouth of Robusti himself, caused him: "can you permit an artisan, nay not even an artisan, an apprentice, to aspire even jestingly to the hand of your daughter—Messer Jacopo, I declare to you that if I had a daughter, and Valerio Zuccato instead of being my son, were my nephew, I would not even let him dream of marrying her."

"Oh, that's my wife's business," replied Robusti, "and will be my daughter's, when she is old enough to be married. Maria has talent, a great deal of talent, I hope she will soon paint portraits, I shall not be ashamed to sign, and which posterity will actually ascribe to me: I hope she will make for herself a celebrated name, and consequently an illustrious position. An independent fortune is insured to her by my exertions. Let her then, if she chooses, marry Valerio, or even Bartholomeo Bozza, the apprentice of the apprentice, she is not the less Maria Robusti, daughter, pupil, and successor of Tintoretto. Some women can afford to marry for their happiness, and not for their interest. The young patricians of the present day are more inclined towards their pages, than towards the noble cavaliers who are offered to their choice. Maria is a patrician also in her way. Let her then act like a patrician. Besides, do you know that the child really loves Valerio?"

Old Zuccato shook his head without replying, that his gratitude and joy might not betray itself. But the master could perceive that his temper was softened, and after a long discussion, in which Sebastian defended himself inch by inch, but with less bitterness than at the commencement, he allowed himself to be led away to the cathedral, where the brothers Zuccato were finishing the grand mosaic of the dome just above the principal interior door. The subject was taken from the Apocalypse, and the designs were by Titian and Tintoretto themselves.

CHAPTER II.

When old Zuccato entered the oriental cupola, where on a gilded back-ground there appeared, like terrible apparitions, the colossal figures of the prophets and the apocalyptic forms invoked in their visions, he was affected by a superstitious awe, which, resisting his efforts to subdue it, made his feelings as an artist at first yield to those of religion; he crossed himself, saluted the altar, which was illuminated by golden lamps burning dimly in the distance, and depositing his plumed cap upon the marble pavement, he recited a short prayer. When he had finished, he rose slowly from his kneeling posture, which the stiffness of his limbs, caused by age, rendered a painful one, and directed his attention to the figures of the four evangelists, which were the nearest to him. But as his sight was weak, he could only get an idea of the *tout ensemble*, and turning to Tintoretto, said: "It cannot be denied that these great masses of colour produce some effect, but it is nothing but mere charlatanism after all. Oh! oh! sir, there you are." These last words were addressed to a tall, pale young man, who, on hearing the echo of the cupola repeat the sharp and broken tones of his father's voice, had descended hastily from his ladder in order to receive him. Francesco Zuccato, after having combated gently and with moderation the prejudices of his father, had ended by following his vocation, and, avoiding frequent interviews which could only renew the subject of discord, was still on all occasions humble and respectful towards the author of his days. In order to receive him more respectfully, he had hastily washed his face and hands, thrown off his working apron, and put on his silken robe ornamented with silver, which one of his apprentices brought him. In this costume he looked as handsome and elegant as the most fashionable young patrician. But his melancholy brow and the gravity of his smile bore the impression of the noble cares, and the sacred pride of the artist.

Old Zuccato gazed at him from head to foot, and resisting his paternal feelings, said ironically:

"Well, sir, what plan must we pursue, in order to be able to admire your *chefs-d'œuvre.* If they were not, body and soul, so completely part and parcel of the wall, we would ask you to lower one or two of them, but you doubtless understand the interests of your own glory best, by placing them so high that no one can see them."

"My father," replied the young man modestly, "the happiest day of my life would be that on which these humble productions should obtain an indulgent consideration from you, but your severity is a far greater obstacle than any which separates you from the dome itself. If I could conquer your repugnance, I have no doubt that, with my brother's assistance, I could get you to the top of the scaffolding, whence you might easily embrace the *coup d'œil*, and catch the design of the figures, which is concealed from you where you stand."

"Your brother indeed!" replied the old grumbler, "and pray where is your brother? Does he not deign to descend from his glass beadwork-heaven up there, to salute his father?"

"My brother has gone out," replied Francesco, "or else he would have hastened to put on his robe, and come with me to kiss your hand, but I expect him every moment, and he will be delighted to see you here."

"And I suppose as usual, he will come in singing a drinking song, his cap on one side, his eye wandering, and his gait unsteady. A workman who frequents the tavern during working hours, would indeed be a trusty guide up all your ladders there!"

"My father, Valerio is not gone to the tavern. He has gone to fetch materials for our work. I have sent him to the manufactory at Murano for some specimens of enamel, which have been made expressly for me, and the exact shades of which are very difficult to obtain."

"In that case you may make my compliments to him yourself, for there are two leagues between here and Murano, and he has the water* against him, which will answer his purpose two ways. The excuse may serve his turn for stopping to drink with his boatmen, and the oar will not fit his hand to-day better than the trowel."

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* The reflux which is felt in the Lagoons at certain hours renders their navigation difficult.

"Father, you have heard false reports of Valerio," replied the young man eagerly. "It is true he likes pleasure and Cyprus wine, but it does not interrupt his diligence. He is an excellent workman, and whenever I trust him to execute a commission, he fulfills it with an exactitude and intelligence which leave nothing to be desired."

"Valerio, here is Messer Valerio," exclaimed from the top of the scaffolding, the apprentice Bartolomeo, who could see through one of the openings in the cupola, the arrival of the gondola at the Piazetta steps; and in a moment Valerio appeared, followed by his workmen, carrying a large basket full of the materials for their mosaic fabric and singing in a beautiful sonorous voice, without much respect for the holy place he was in, the burden of a love song.

But as soon as he saw his father he left off singing, and taking off his cap, advanced and saluted him, with the frankness and confidence of a soul which knows no wrong.

Zuccato was much impressed by his appearance, and his open and joyous expression. Valerio was the handsomest young man in Venice. He was not so tall, but stronger built, and more robust than his brother. At first sight, the only impression made by his beautiful countenance, was of its gaiety, frankness and courage. But after a little attention, the sacred fire of genius appeared, though it was sometimes obscured by the gay indifference of his character, and also in some degree, it must be confessed, by the fatigues of his pleasure-seeking life, which made him a little paler than was natural to him. This, however, formed but a variation of, and almost ennobled his extreme beauty, and moderated the fearless serenity of his look. He was always extremely particular in his toilette, and set the fashion to the proudest young nobles in Venice. He was much sought after by them, and ladies of the highest rank, on account of his great talent for designing embroidery, which was afterwards executed under his direction, in gold and silver, on the richest materials. A velvet cap ornamented with an arabesque *a la* Valerio Zuccato, a fringe after his pattern, a cloth of gold mantle, the border embroidered in coloured silks, interlaced with chain-work, flowers, or foliage, after his Byzantine mosaics, were in the eyes of a high-born dame, or young "elegant," objects of the first necessity. This employment, at once a relaxation from his more serious labours and his pleasures, was extremely lucrative, and was carried on at his workshops of St. Philip, and St. James, with a certain mystery, into which however every body was benevolently initiated. His pleasing appearaece, his fascinating manner, his acquaintance with the young nobles of the city, and the joyous spirits of the workmen who filled his workshop, naturally led him towards a life of pleasure, but his innate energy and extreme fidelity to his engagaments preserved him from any excesses which would have ruined his genius.

The most tender and generous friendship united the two brothers; and now by their joint entreaties they vanquished the feigned reluctance of old Zuccato to mount their scaffolding, and placing a ladder on each side of the one on which he ventured, they assisted him until he arrived safely at the last and highest stage. Tintoretto, who although already aged, was still hale and vigorous, and accustomed to use the large cupolas of the cathedral as his studio, followed them in order to witness the surprise of Sebastian.

The sentiment of religious awe which the old man had felt at first, gave way to involuntary delight, when placed at the proper height for the full effect, he saw the magnificent figures of the prophets and evangelists, and all the other completed parts of this vast and marvellous composition. Here the Ascension of the Virgin, after the design of Salviati; there the Resurrection of Lazarus, a fearful scene, where the corpse seemed actually about to detach itself from the brilliant surface of the wall, the St. Mark of Titian, a magnificent figure supported by the crescent moon, and whose heavenward flight seemed almost appreciable by the eye; the festoons of flowers round the circle sustained by lovely winged cherubims, and over all the Vision of St. John, where the condemned were seen precipitated into the flames of Hell, whilst the children of God, clothed in white garments, and mounted on white coursers, were lost in the softened yet brilliant beauty of the upper part of the cupola, like a nest of cygnets concealing themselves in the rosy mists of the morning.

At first Zuccato tried to resist the impression these performances made upon him, by attributing it to the effect of the varying, shifting light, to the favourable situation and imposing dimensions of the figures. But when Tintoretto obliged him to approach nearer, so as to appreciate the details, he was constrained to allow that he had never imagined the mosaic art susceptible of such perfection, and that the flying cherubim supporting the garlands might rival in form and colour the pictures of the greatest masters.

But miserly of his praise, and arguing against his own secret conviction, the old man insisted upon it that even now he could only see the merit of exactitude and patience; all the honour, said he, must return to the artist who traced the models for these groups, and designed the detail of these ornaments.

"My father," replied Francesco, with modest confidence, "if you would deign to examine the designs you will, I think, at least accord us the praise of having displayed something more than the bare fidelity of copyists."

"For instance," said Tintoretto, "produce my designs for the Vision of the Apocalypse, and display that artistic skill, that painter's hand, which distinguishes Francesco and Valerio Zuccato from all other artists of their class."

Several of the designs were exhibited, and Sebastian might have convinced himself of the science with which the Zuccati had rendered the intentions of the artists, tracing themselves the pure and elegant form of their subjects, and creating their magnificence of colour from the simple sketch of the painter. Valerio, pressed by his brother, owned himself the author of many small figures; and then in his turn, speaking for Francesco, he showed his father the figures of two of the archangels flying towards each other, one of which in green drapery was his own work, and the other in turquoise blue garments, was the composition of Francesco himself, without the assistance of any painter.

Zuccato gazed at these two figures, which were really as beautiful as any of those for which a model had been furnished. Francesco had given the features of his brother to his archangel, whilst Valerio's archangel was the portrait of Francesco.

They had employed materials of extreme beauty in this cherished work, and had placed it modestly in an obscure angle, where no careless observer would descry it. Old Zuccato remained long silent and motionless before this winged pair, and confused at seeing the error of his life so gloriously refuted, was seized with a terrible ill-humour. He descended the ladders, coldly took his mantle from Valerio without deigning to utter a word of encouragement either to him or his brother, and hardly saluting Tintoretto himself, went with a firmer step than might have been expected from his age towards the threshold of the cathedral. But hardly had he reached the first step, when yielding to the yearning of his better nature he returned, opened his arms to his children, and pressed them to his bosom, shedding tears upon their beautiful heads.

CHAPTER III.

"Huzzah! Huzzah! how fast the work gets on! Some Mastic here, you little black monkey! Maso! do you hear? Brother Vincent, what, in the devil's name, do you keep all the apprentices for? Send me one of your bearded seraphs there to help me a little. By Bacchus, if I throw my beetle at that great porpoise Maso, I am sure it will be a long time before the republic sees such an ugly figure again!"

So bawled out from the top of his scaffolding the red-bearded giant, who was directing the repairs of the chapel of St. Isidore, this part of the building being confided to Dominic Bianchini, nicknamed the Red, and his two brothers, competitors and rivals of the two Zuccati in the mosaic art.

"Will you hold your noise, you great bell? will you be patient you tower of red copper?" replied the surly Vincent Bianchini, the eldest of the three brothers. "Have not you got your own apprentices? Make them work, and leave mine alone. Haven't you got Jean Visentine; that pretty milk-cheese of the Alps? Where is Reazo gone?—your horse bull, who sings so well in the choir on Sundays. I dare say all your apprentices are running from tavern to tavern, trying to get credit for a bottle of wine in your name, and if so, they will not be back again in a hurry."

"Vincent," said Dominic, "it is well for you you are my brother and my fellow labourer, for with one kick I could overturn your scaffolding, and send your illustrious self and your interesting apprentices on the pavement!"

"If you attempt it," cried Gian Antonio, the youngest of the three brothers, in a sharp voice, shaking the ladder on which Dominic was working, "I'll show you that the highest perch is not always the safest. Not that I care a bit more for Vincent's bones than for yours, but I don't like bullying, and for the last few days, mind you, you have taken up, sometimes with him, and sometimes with me, a tone I can't put up with."

The savage Dominic cast an angry glance at young Antonio, and allowed himself to be shaken on the ladder for some seconds without speaking. But as soon as Antonio was again occupied with his cement under the portico, he went down, threw off his cap and apron, turned up his sleeves, and began to inflict upon him a rough punishment.

The priest Alberto Zio, also a distinguished mosaist, who was on a ladder pursuing his occupation, on one of the pediments, hastened down in order to separate the combatants, and Vincent Bianchini, running quickly from the interior of the chapel, beetle in hand, mingled in the quarrel, more from resentment against Dominic than from any interest in Antonio.

The priest, having vainly endeavored to bring them back to Christain feelings, at last used an argument to addess them which rarely failed of its effect.

"If the Zuccati hear you," said he, "they will rejoice at your quarrels, and think that it is their greater mildness and good understanding which makes their work superior to yours."

"He's right," said Dominic the Red, taking up his apron; "we'll settle your quarrel in the evening at the tavern. Just now we must not give our enemies any advantage over us."

The two other Bianchini yielded to his advice, and whilst taking up their fresh cement upon their trowels, father Alberto entered into conversation with them: "You are wrong, my children," said he, "to regard the Zuccati as your enemies; they are your competitors, that is all. If they work upon different principles from yours, they still recognize the merit of your works. I have often heard their head apprentice, Bartolomeo Bozza, say that your cement was of a superior quality to theirs, and that the Zuccati willingly allowed it themselvs."

"Oh, as for Bartolomeo Bozza," said Vincent Bianchini, "I say nothing against him, he is a good workman, and a good fellow enough. I would not object to getting him into my service. But don't talk of these Zuccati; there are no worse intriguers anywhere, and did their talent equal their ambition, they would soon crush all their rivals. Happily they are eaten up with indolence; the eldest wastes his time in imagining impossible subjects, and the youngest carries on a contraband trade at San Filippo, and spends the proceeds with people above his own rank."

"The star of the Zuccati may fall from the clouds some day though," said the envious Dominic, "notwithstanding all the protection the painters give them, if one thought it worth the trouble it would cost."

"How so," cried the two others, "if you know any means of humbling them, tell us, and we will forgive all your wrongs towards us."

"I don't care more about you than them," said Dominic, "only I know it would not be impossible to prove that they must apply their allowance in doing useless work, and thereby waste the revenues of the republic."

"You are uncharitable, Messer Dominic," said the priest, with severity. "If you speak in such a style of two men who are generally esteemed, you will give rise to the suspicion that you are prompted by jealousy."

"Well, and I am jealous," said Dominic, stamping his foot. "Why should not I be jealous? It is not a great injustice on the part of the Procurators to give them a hundred gold ducats, whilst we have only thirty although we have been working ten years at the genealogical tree of the virgin. I am sure if the Zuccati had worked all their lives, they would not have completed half so much. How many months does it take them to do the skirt of a robe, or a child's hand? Just watch them a little, and see what their fine work costs the republic."

"They do not work so fast as you do," said the priest, "but then what perfection of design! what richness of colour!"

"If you were not a priest," retorted Vincent, shrugging his shoulders, "you would be taught how to speak differently? you had better return to your confessional and censer, and not try to judge of things you know nothing at all about."

"Messer Vincent, what do you mean," cried the priest, a little offended. "You forget I knew the trade before you did, and that I was the favourite pupil of the master of us all, the ingenious Rizzo, the worthy successor of the old masters in gypso plastic.

"You may talk as much of ingenity as you please, but by Christ there's no great amount of imagination wanted in mosaic work. It only needs what you priests and do-nothing Zuccati want, untiring arms, ribs, and sides of iron, precision, and activity. Attend to your masses, father Alberto, and leave us alone."

"Hush," said Antonio, "there's that surly old Zuccato passing by. Look at his sons kissing his hands, and attending him cap in hand. Would not one think it was the doge attended by his senators?"

"That savours of the Magnifico, and is rather too good a joke. I think—."

"Silence," said Vincent, "here is Messer Robusti coming to look at our work."

All three took off their caps more from respect for the master's reputation, than from honour to his genius which they were incapable of appreciating. Father Alberto went to meet him, and took him into the chapel of St. Isidore. Tintoretto gave a look round at the frescoed pannels, praised the repairs of the ancient Greek mosaics which had been entrusted to the priest, and retired, saluting the Bianchini without speaking to them, for he neither valued their productions nor esteemed their characters.

CHAPTER IV.

When the day's work was over, and the Zuccati had supped with their principal apprentices, Bozza, Marini and Ceccato, (who afterwards became excellent artists,) at a little tavern, where they were accustomed to meet when the occupations of the day were concluded, Valerio was going to look after his own affairs, either of business or pleasure, when he was stopped by his brother, who said to him :

" For once, dear Valerio, you must sacrifice a part of your evening to me. I always retire early, you know, and you will have plenty of time afterwards."

" Willingly," said Valerio, "but on condition that we take a gondola and row about a little, for I am worn out with the day's work, and must rest from one fatigue to another of a different character."

" I cannot help you to row," said Francesco " for I have not your robust health, my dear Valerio, and as I must not incapacitate myself for to-morrow's labour, I must not over fatigue myself to-night, but if I refuse you this relaxation, I see I shall scarcely get the two or three hours of your company which I wish for; and therefore I will ask Bozza to join us, he is a worthy fellow, and will not be an intruder in the conversation."

Bartolomeo gladly accepted the offer, and having engaged one of the best looking gondolas, he took one oar, and Valerio the other. Standing at the two extremities of the little vessel, they made her bound over the foaming waters.

It was the hour when all the gay world of Venice was abroad on the Grand Canal to enjoy the freshness of the evening. The little boat glided rapidly among the gondolas, like a wild sea-bird seeking refuge from the sportsman in the shelter of protecting sea-weed. But, notwithstanding the agility and silence of the rowers, all eyes were upon them; ladies bent forward on their cushions to get a longer look at the handsome Valerio, whose skill and grace excited envy in both patrician and gondolier, and whose appearance was a singular mixture of audacity and candour. Bozza, too, was a strong and well-made youth, although thin and pale. A dark fire burned in his black eyes, a thick beard covered half his face; but though his features were deficient in regularity, they drew attention by their sad and disdainful expression. Thin and pale, also, but noble, not arrogant, melancholy, not disdainful, Francesco Zuccato, lying on the black velvet cushion of the gondola, leaning negligently on his elbow, and plunged in a reverie too deep even to see the crowd, shared unconsciously the admiration of the ladies, which Valerio excited.

When they had reached the termination of the

Grand Canal, they floated idly through the lagunes, far from the frequented parts, and keeping the shore on their lee, they lay down on the cushions, and talked at their ease beneath a heaven sparkling with unnumbered stars.

"My dear Valerio," said the elder Zuccato, "I am again going to annoy you with my remonstrances; but, indeed you must promise me to lead a wiser life."

"You can never annoy me, my beloved brother," said Valerio, "and I am always most grateful for your solicitude; but I cannot promise you to change. The life I lead suits my fancy, I am as happy as a man can well be. Why do you, who love me so much, wish me to abstain from happiness?"

"This life will kill you," exclaimed Francesco. "It is impossible to withstand, as you do at the same time, pleasure and fatigue, labour and dissipation."

"On the contrary, this kind of life animates and invigorates me," replied Valerio. "What is life, as it proceeds from the hand of God, but a continual alternation of enjoyment and privation, fatigue and activity? Let me alone, Francesco, and do not judge of my strength by yours. It is certainly one of Nature's inconsistencies not to have given the strongest constitution, or the greatest capacity for enjoyment, to the more estimable of our two characters; but you have so many other advantages over me, dear Francesco, that you need not envy me these."

"I do not envy them," said Francesco, though they are the most precious of all, and the most necessary for our perfect appreciation of happiness. I delight in thinking that my brother, who is dearer to me than myself, is free from the lassitude and *ennui* which often devour me; but this is not the only point. Valerio, you certainly care somewhat about your station, the friendship of illustrious artists, the protection of the Senate, the favour of the Procurators . . . ."

"I, brother!" cried the volatile young man, "except the friendship of our dear Master Titian, and the kindness of Robusti, two men whom I venerate deeply; except the love of my father and that of my brother, whom I prefer to all the world, I care little for any thing else, and I need nothing but a couple of bottles of Scyros wine to console me for the loss of my employment, and the displeasure of the Senate."

"You care at least for honour," said Francesco, gravely, "for the honour of your father's name, and your own, for which I, myself, am guarantee."

"Certainly," exclaimed Valerio, hastily raising himself on his elbow, "but what can you mean?"

"To tell you that the Bianchini are conspiring against us, and that they may make us lose not merely the advantageous position and rich salary, which two bottles will so amply compensate you for, but the confidence of the Senate, and even the esteem of the citizens."

"Evohe!" exclaimed Valerio, "I should like to see that. Let us go to the Bianchini, if it be so, and give them a fair challenge. They are three, but our friend Bozza will make our third. Our's is a good cause; we will make a vow to the Madonna, and behold us delivered from these traitors."

"That is folly," said Francesco, "Divine power will not declare itself in favour of the aggressors, and such we should be, if we challenge men against whom at present we can prove no cause of offence. Besides, the Bianchini would but meet our offer of a fair fight, with the assassin's dagger.—They are dangerous adversaries, they will not offend us openly, whilst we are protected by powerful friends, and as soon as their hate is openly declared, our ruin is sealed. In fact I am already anxious,—Vincent, generally so polite towards me, already neglects the usual salutation when I pass his scaffolding. This very morning, whilst reconducting our father through the cathedral, I saw the Bianchini observing us maliciously, and turning us into ridicule. Their hatred, long concentrated in the depth of their hearts, now shows itself in every glance. Bozza can tell you that often, after the day's work is over, or in the morning, when he has chanced to arrive the first, he has caught Dominic or Vincent Bianchini on our scaffolding, looking at the smallest details of our work with the most scrupulous attention."

"All this does not prove much—if they do not salute you, it is because they are naturally rude; if they looked malicious this morning, it was because they envied us for having a good father; if they examine our work, it is most likely they are endeavouring to discover the cause of our superiority. Are these motives for disquietude ?"

"Why then, instead of speaking to Bozza, as would be but natural when he meets them upon our scaffolding, do they retire hastily by the opposite ladders, as though they had just committed a bad action ?"

"If I meet them there," cried Valerio, clenching his fist, "they had better give some explanation, or by Bacchus, I will make them descend a little quicker than they went up."

"That would only widen the breach. To revenge the one you had punished, the two others would pursue you to the death. Believe me, the noblest means are also the most polite. Let us be prudent and retain the high position of honourable men. Our generosity may perhaps soften them ; at any rate it will clearly prove them to be in the wrong, and if they persecute us, we shall obtain justice."

"But brother, what persecution can they raise against us ? What power have they to injure us ? Can they prove that we do not work better than they do ?"

"They can say that we do not work so fast, and that is very easy to prove."

"And we can prove that it is easy to work fast when one works badly, and that no perfect work will brook precipitation."

"That is not so easy to prove. Between ourselves, the Procurator-Cashier appointed for the examination of works of art, is not much of an artist. He sees nothing in mosaic work, but an application of little pieces of coloured stones more or less brilliant. The truth of the colouring, the beauty of the design, or the intention of the composition signify nothing to him. He only sees what strikes the vulgar eye, the quickness and brilliancy of the work. Did I not vainly attempt the other day, to make him comprehend that the old pieces of gold crystal which had already been employed by our ancestors in their works, and were slightly tarnished by time, were far more suitable to the colouring than those made at present? 'You do very wrong, Messer Francesco,' said he, 'to yield all the newly gilt crystal to the Bianchini. The commissioners had determined that the old should be used mingled with the new, and I cannot understand why you should have preferred the old. If you think the mixture of the new and old would not produce a good effect, you are setting yourself up for a better judge than the commissioners themselves.' "

"Yes, and you nearly made me laugh outright," interrupted Valerio, "when you replied to him, with such a serious air, 'Monsignor, I have no such insolent pretension.' "

"But did I not vainly endeavor to show him," replied Francesco, "that the brilliancy of the new gold injured the effect and spoiled the shading of all the other colouring, which could only be thrown up by the reddish tinge of the old gold, and that if I had chosen the new and brilliant pieces, I must have made my flesh-colours too purple and without roundness, and the robes without folds and without any shading?"

"He gave you," said Valerio, laughing, "a very unanswerable reason in a very dry manner. 'The Bianchini,' said he, 'do not give themselves half so much trouble, and their mosaics are far finer to the eye than yours.' After such a reason, why need you trouble yourself. Leave out the shading, leave out the roundness. Make the skirts of the robes out of one great mass of enamel, and cover St. Nicholas's stomach with it; make St. Cecilia a fine head of hair out of a badly baked tile, make St. John the Baptist's lamb out of a handful of quick lime, and the Procurators will double your salary, and the public will clap their hands. Pardieu! why should you, who think so much of fame, persist so obstinately in the worship of art?"

"I do think of fame, it is true," said Francesco, "but it is of a lasting fame, and not the vain popularity of the day. I would wish to leave an honoured, if not an illustrious name; and that those who see the cupola of St. Mark five hundred years hence should say—'This was the work of a conscientious artist!'"

"And what makes you think that the public will be more enlightened five hundred years hence than now?" said Bozza, in his hollow voice, breaking silence for the first time.

"There will always be great minds to revise and direct the popular judgment, and it is the great men of all times whom I wish to please. Is that an unworthy ambition, Valerio?"

"It is a noble ambition; but it is ambition, and all ambition is a malady of the soul," replied the younger Zuccato.

"A malady," answered Francesco, "without which no great intellect could flourish, without which it must languish in the shade without enlightening the world. It is the wind which fans the spark, raises it to a flame, and extends it far and wide. Without this vivifying breeze there would be no warmth, no light, no life."

"I do not feel very death-like," cried Valerio, "and yet this breeze has never blown upon me. I feel the spark of life always glowing in my breast and in my brain. But provided that I am warmed by its divine glow, and that I feel the life within me, what does it matter to me, whether the light emanates from me or elsewhere? All light has one divine origin. What signifies the halo round a human head? Glory to uncreated genius! The glory of man is no more in himself than the sun is in the water which reflects his image."

"It may be so," replied Francesco, raising his large dark eyes full of tears towards heaven. "Perhaps it is but a folly and a vanity to think more of oneself, because, by having in thought approached the ideal, one has become capable of realizing the beautiful better than the common herd,—and yet, for what should man glorify himself, if not for that?"

"Why should man glorify himself at all? Provided he enjoys himself, is not that happiness sufficient?"

"And is not glory the most sensible, the most exciting, the most intense of man's enjoyments?" said Bozza, turning his glance towards Venice.

It was the hour when the Queen of the Adriatic, like a beauty adorning herself with diamonds for a ball, began to display her many lights, and long garlands of fire were reflected in the tranquil waters, like jewels in an admiring mirror.

"You do not make a right use of words, friend Bozza," said Valerio, disturbing the phosphorescent water with his oar, and scattering a shower of pale light round the black sides of the bark. "The most intense of human enjoyments is love; the most sensible is friendship; the most exciting is indeed glory; but why say only exciting? Say rather, poignant, terrible, and dangerous."

"But may it not also be said that it is the most elevated?" said Francesco.

"I can never think so," replied Valerio, "that which is in itself sweetest and noblest in life, is to love; that is indeed to conceive, to feel the true ideal. We must, therefore, love everything which approaches it, seek it everywhere, take the nearest approach to it—"

"That is to say," answered Francesco, "embrace a phantom, seize a shadow, fix an illusion, and adore the spectre of one's own phantasy; is that what you term to enjoy, and to possess?"

"My brother," said Valerio, "if you were not sick at heart, you would not speak so. The man who whilst on earth desires a better life than this, must be either eaten up by pride or an ingrate who suffers. There is enjoyment for all who possess the spirit of love! Were there only friendship on the earth, man ought not to complain. Had I only you in the world, I should still bless heaven. I can imagine none better; and had God permitted me to create myself a brother, I could not even have imagined one more perfect than Francesco. Ah! God himself is the only great artist, and what we ask from him in our wildest dreams, is not worth that which he gives us in his unchangeable wisdom."

"Ah! my dear Valerio," exclaimed Francesco, embracing his brother, "you are right; I am proud and ungrateful. You are worth us all, and are the living proof of the truth of your theory. Yes, I am, indeed, sick at heart! Cure me by your tenderness; you, whose soul is so strong and so pure. Holy Virgin! pray for me; I have, indeed, been culpable to have indulged melancholy with such a brother at my side."

"And yet," said Valerio, smiling, "the proverb says, no great artist is free from melancholy."

"Nor from hatred," said Bozza, gloomily.

"Oh, a proverb is always half false," said Valerio, "for every proverb having its opposite, says truth and falsehood at once. Francesco is a great artist, and yet I would wager soul and body that he has never known the feeling of hatred."

"Never towards others," said Francesco; "towards myself I have often, that is the evil effect of my pride. I am always pining because I am not better and more skilful that I am. I wish to be admired for my merits, and not because of my sufferings."

"You are and must be loved for both," exclaimed Valerio, "but it is possible that all men are not formed to be contented with affection alone. Perhaps, without the craving for admiration, there would be neither great artists nor *chef-d'œuvres.* The admiration of those otherwise indifferent to us, is a friendship which need not interest us much, and yet we find it indispensable; and the very need felt for it proves that it must serve some great end in the designs of God."

"It serves to make us suffer, and God is sovereignly unjust," said Bozza, throwing himself back in the gondola with a gesture of despair.

"Do not say so," said Valerio. "Look, my dear comrade, how beautiful is the sea just under the horizon. Listen to the sweet sighing of that guitar. Have you no fair mistress? Bartolomeo, do you forget that we are your friends?"

"You are great artists," said Bozza, "and I am but an apprentice."

"Does that prevent our loving you?"

"It ought not to prevent your loving me, but it prevents me from loving you as I might do if I were your equal."

"Pardieu! if that were any reason," said Valerio, 'I should love scarcely any one, for I have but the mere title of an artist, and am in truth but an artisan. All those I most love and cherish are far above me, beginning with my brother, who is my master. My father was a good painter. Vecelli and Robusti each of them is a Colossus, before whom I am as nothing; nevertheless I love them, and never dream of repining at my own inferiority. Artists! artists, ye are all children of the same mother, and her name is Envy. More or less ye all share her qualities, and that consoles me for being nothing better than a scapegrace."

"Say not so, Valerio," said the elder brother; "if you deigned to take more trouble you would be the first mosaist of the age; your name would efface that of Rizzo himself, and my name would be after yours."

"For which I should be very sorry. No, by St. Theodosius, may you always be first. Sacred indolence! preserve me from such a fatiguing honour!"

"Do not utter such blasphemy, Valerio; art ought to be above all other interests?"

"Whoever loves art loves glory," said Bozza, with his deep voice, always sad and lugubrious as the sound of a deep bell in the midst of a joyous strain, "and whoever loves glory is ready to sacrifice everthing to it."

"Many thanks! as for me, I will never sacrifice anything to it. Away with the harlot! And yet I love art, you know it well, although they say I care for nothing but love and wine. I must love it well, or I should not sacrifice to it half of a life which I feel vigour enough to devote entirely to pleasure. I am never happier than when at work.

If I succeed I could throw my cap over the tower of St. Mark. If I fail, I am not discouraged ; and even the species of anger I feel against myself, is yet a pleasure of the same kind as one feels in a restive horse, a stormy sea, or a fiery wine. But the approbation of others does not stimulate me more than a reverence from the Bianchini. When Francesco, my other self, says, 'that is well done,' I am satisfied. When my father, whilst looking at my archangel, smiled in spite of himself, though frowning at the same time, I was happy. And if the Procurator does say that Dominic the Red works better than I do, so much the worse for the Procurator ! but I shall not carry my compassion to the point of shedding tears. If the good people of Venice find that I do not put enough brick-red in my flesh colour, nor enough ochre in my draperies, all hail to their dictum ! If you were not so foolish I could not laugh so much at you, and that would be a pity, for I laugh with my whole heart."

"Happy, thrice happy indifference!" said Francesco.

Whilst thus conversing they approached the city. When they were near the shore, "Before I quit you," said Valerio, "we must understand each other. Of what do you complain ? What is it you require of me ? That I should cease to divert myself ? You may as well try to hinder water from flowing ?"

"That you should divert yourself with less publicity," replied Francesco, "and that you should renounce for some time, at least, your workshop at San Filippo. These circumstances may be interpreted unfavourably. People are already asking how so many arabesque designs, and so many other occupations can be compatible with the necessary quantity of labour in the cathedral. Did I not know your indefatigable activity, I could not understand it myself; and if I did not see your works advance, I could not believe that two or three hours' sleep, after nights of pleasure and gaiety, would suffice a workman confined all day at a laborious occupation. Prevent your numerous acquaintances, and above all, those gossipping young patricians, from coming to visit you so frequently at the cathedral. Such an honour wounds the self-love of the Bianchini; they say these young people make you waste your time; that they take you from your labour to attend to trifles; for instance, that joyous brotherhood which you are just going to institute, and which is agitating all the tradesmen in the city."

"Alas!" cried Valerio, "it is precisely for that I am in such a hurry to quit you this evening; they are waiting for me to regulate the costume. I cannot draw back, and you promised on your honour, Francesco, to be of the party."

"I promised on condition that the affair did not take place until after St. Mark, when I hope my cupola will be finished."

"I mentioned that both for you and myself; but you may imagine that two or three hundred young men, anxious for pleasure, will not willingly listen to the reasons of one who is only eager for work. They declared that if we refused to join them immediately, the association must break up; that nothing could be done without me, and then they reproached me, saying that I had led them on, that expenses had been entered into, and the fete announced, and that such a long delay would give all the other clubs a triumph over them. In a word, they said so much, that I engaged both for you and myself to inaugurate the banner of the Lizard in a fortnight. We are to commence by running at the ring, and then we are to have a magnificent repast, where each member will be expected to introduce a young and beautiful lady."

"But do you not think these follies will retard your work?"

"All hail to Folly! but I defy her to prevent my working when work-time comes. There is a time for everything brother, so I must count upon you?"

"You may inscribe my name, and I will send my subscription by you, but I cannot go to the fete. It must not be said that the two Zuccati amuse themselves at once. It must be seen that while one diverts himself, the other works for two."

"Dear brother," cried Valerio, embracing him, "I will work for four the evening before, and you must come to the festival. It will be a superb fete, and for a noble end; entirely plebian and brotherly. It shall no longer be said that the

Patricians alone have the right of amusing themselves, and that workmen can only get up clubs of devotees. No, no, the artisan is not always to be doing penance. The rich fancy that we are born for nothing but to expiate their sins. And you, Bartolomeo, you must be one of us: I shall inscribe your name; it will cost you a little expense, but if you have not the money now, I have, and I will manage everything. Adieu, dear friends, till to-morrow. Dear brother, you must not say I do not listen to your advice, with all the respect due to one's elder. Now, confess you are contented with me?"

As he spoke, Valerio leaped lightly on to the shore by the ducal palace, and disappeared under the changing shadows of the colonade.

CHAPTER V.

The same evening Bozza, returning from a visit to his mistress, more sad, more gloomy than ever, tired of love, of labour, and of life, was walking quickly along the solitary shore. A high wind had risen, the waves beat against the marble quays, and mysterious voices seemed murmuring words of hatred and malediction under the dark arcades of the old palace.

Suddenly he found himself in front of a man, whose heavy and resounding steps had not before been able to rouse him from his reverie. By the light of a lantern attached to one of the mooring timbers, Bozza and the other nocturnal promenader recognised each other, and stopping face to face, they measured each other from head to foot; Bartolomeo thinking the man might have some bad design, put his hand upon his dagger, but contrary to his expectations, Vincent Bianchini (for it was he) lifted his cap, and accosted him with courtesy.

Vincent, like his brother Dominic, was a vulgar companion and a bad man. Less brutal in appearance, and capable, notwithstanding his want of education, of assuming tolerable manners, profoundly cunning, and hardened in lying by the many infamous examinations he had suffered before the Council of Ten; he was certainly the most dangerous of the three Bianchini.

"Messer Bartolomeo," said he, "I have just come from a place, where I had expected to meet you, but where I am very glad you had not, as I had, the curiosity to slip in unperceived."

"I do not know what you wish to say, Messer Vincenzo," replied Bozza, with a slight bow, endeavouring to pass by.

Vincent measured his pace by Bozza's, without seeming to perceive the desire which the other showed of avoiding him.

"You know without doubt," said he, "that the principal members of the new association have been assembled to deliberate upon its laws and admissions to membership."

"It is very possible," replied Bartolomeo, "but that matters little to me, Messer Bianchini, I am not a man of pleasure."

"But you are a man of honour, and that is the reason why I rejoice not to have seen you amongst the auditors of this momentous deliberation."

"What do you mean?" cried Bozza, stopping.

"I mean to say, brave Bartolomeo," replied Vincent, "that had you been there, things would have been differently managed; and, perhaps, there would have been some little noise about it. But, perhaps it is better as it is, for such a trifling affair is not worth—"

"Stop! speak plainly, Messer, I beg of you," interrupted Bozza, impatiently; "did anything pass touching my honour?"

"Why, not personally, perhaps; but it was rather an universal affront, of which you have your share. This is what occurred. You know the new company is being formed after the example of the others, of members chosen from different corporations, which rival each other in riches and talent. Into this one in particular it was intended to receive all those workers in glass whose riches and love of pleasure would induce them to wish to join. Architects, and glass blowers, founders, and mosaic workers; in short, all trades who are concerned in the repairs of the cathedral were to furnish their candidates. That point settled, it remained to register the names of these candidates; and the originators, having at their head your master, Valerio Zuccato, met together for this purpose. But would you believe that this artist, so celebrated for his agreeable manners and popularity, has shown himself full of disdain and haughtiness towards most of the proposed admissions. Yes, truly, he refused admission to gentleman and senator, declaring that whoever had not taken up mastership in some profession or other, was not worthy of being admitted into this club. Many objections were raised; and many even ventured to say that some apprentices had more economy and talent, and consequently more money and more merit than their masters; but to this he would not even listen; and he expressed himself in terms so vain and so harsh, that he affronted every one. Just then I happened to be near him without his seeing me, and some one said to him, 'But if you succeed in this, shall not you regret the exclusion of Bozza, that good comrade who works so well, with such a good character, and so much attachment for you and your brother.' 'If my apprentice,' replied Messer Valerio, 'is admitted into the company, I shall retire.' But nevertheless the majority carried it. Apprentices are to be admitted, provided they are considered by the assembly worthy of soon taking up mastership in their respective professions."

Bozza did not answer, but Vincent Bianchini who observed him closely, saw by his agitated step, and the contraction of his arms beneath his mantle, that he was violently mortified.

Nevertheless he contained himself, for he did not give absolute credence to the words of Bianchini, who seeing that he must not let the wound close, said in an indifferent manner, "It is a pity after all that such a young man, otherwise amiable and well-disposed, should be so puffed up with vanity. His frequent intercourse with the Patricians must be the cause of it. It is injurious to an artist to associate with a rank above his own."

"There is no class above the artist," replied the young apprentice, with some asperity; "if Valerio esteems anything more than his art, he is not worthy of the title he bears."

"This foolish vanity," replied Bianchini, "is a family disease. Sebastian Zuccato despises his children, because he is a painter, and they are mosaists. Francesco, the eldest son, who is the first master in his art, despises his brother because he is only the second master, and he despises his apprentice . . . ."

"Do not say that he despises me, Messer," said Bozza, in hollow voice. "He dares not! Say not that I am a despised man, or by Christ I will teach you the contrary!"

"Being despised by a fool," rejoined Bianchini with the calmness of hypocrisy, "would only redound to your credit. There are some people whose esteen is an insult!"

"But that is not the case between Valerio and me," replied Bozza, endeavouring to struggle against the vipers which were gnawing his heart.

"I hope not," replied Vincent; "but yet I cannot imagine what it was he said to the person who first mentioned your name, for he whispered in his ear, and I could only judge what it was about from the manner in which he drew down his cap over his eyes, and pulled his cloak collar up to his ears, in order to mimic you. He frowned and imitated your gesture, which made the confidant of his foolish jests almost die with laughter."

"And pray, who was it that dared to laugh?" cried Bozza, pulling, in spite of himself, his cap down upon his brows, clenching his fist, and striking his breast, the very gesture which according to Bianchini, Valerio had been turning into ridicule.

"Faith, I can't tell you," replied Vincent. "I could not see his face, because, according to his custom, Valerio had assembled a numerous auditory round him, greedy of his sallies. When I succeeded in passing through the crowd, Valerio had changed his listner, and was speaking of something else, but they were still laughing in the place he had quitted."

"It is well, Messer Vincent," replied the young man, deeply wounded, "I am obliged to you for having told me this; perhaps I shall find an opportunity of recompensing you."

Speaking thus, Bozza hastened his steps, and Bianchini followed with his eyes, his black plume agitated by the wind. After losing sight of him, and applauding himself for having pierced the cuirass at the first blow, he remained for a long time immovable upon the shore, absorbed in thoughts full of hatred and perversity.

CHAPTER VI.

The sun had hardly gilded the summits of the white cupolas of St. Mark, and the gondoliers of the Grand Canal were yet sleeping on its shore by the Leonine column, when the cathedral was already filled with workmen. The apprentices arriving first, raised the ladders, selected the enamels, mixed the cement, singing, whistling, and chatting, in spite of the grief and indignation of Father Alberto, who in vain tried to make the thoughtless young men recollect the sancity of the place, and the presence of the Lord.

But if the exhortations of the priestly mosaist were not productive of much effect in the grand cupola, where the schoolof the Zuccati pursued their labours, at any rate he might satisfy his zeal, and quiet his conscience by long and severe reprimands. Never was he interrupted by gross language or insulting laughter, for if these pupils partook of the gaity, ardour, and vivacity of their Master Valerio, they shared also his kindness and respect for old age and virtue.

But things passed very differently in the chapel of St. Isidore, where the Bianchini family, surrounded by fierce undisciplined apprentices, could scarcely maintain order by furious bellowings and frightful menaces. When an obscene song reached the ears of Alberto, he could do nothing but cross himself, and his grief found vent in stifled exclamations and profound sighs. But when towering above all the low conversations and brutal invectives which the apprentices bandied about, the terrible voice of Dominic the Red came thundering through the echoing arches of the cathedral, the poor priest was often obliged to stop his ear with one hand, and hold himself steady on his ladder with the other, to avoid falling. This morning the masters themselves arrived very early, and commenced their labours almost as soon as the apprentices. St. Mark's day was approaching, when the consecration of the cathedral was to be solemnized, as it had been entirely renovated, and ornamented with fresh pictures by the first masters of the age. Judgment was now to be passed on all its decorations, after ten, sixteen, or twenty years of assiduous labour, without favor or without prejudice. It was to be an important day for all concerned, from the first painter to the mere journeyman; from the architect himself, with his sublime calculations, to the untaught labourer who cut the stones and mixed the mortar. Emulation, jealousy, joyous expectation, or sinister fear, every good and bad passion, with which in all arts and trades men are inspired by the thirst of glory and of gold, raged unceasingly in those aisles echoing with a thousand sounds. Here an oath, there a joyous song; further off a quolibet; above, the hammer; beneath, the trowel; one while the hollow noise of the tools on the mosaic, and then the clear and glassy sound of the crystals falling from the basket upon the pavement like little streams of rubies and emeralds; now the frightful noise of the scraper on the cornice; and now the sharp and piercing sound of the saw cutting the marble, not to mention the nasal intonation of the masses repeating in the various chapels, in spite of all the confusion; the ticking of the clock, the heavy vibration of the bells, and the cries of various domestic animals, imitated by the younger apprentices to such perfection, as to induce Father Alberto, who was always duped by this *ruse*, to turn his head away from his labour, which he never resumed without crossing himself, in expiation of what he was pleased to call his levity of spirit.

If he disciples of the Zuccati were milder and more innocent in their diversions than those of the Bianchini, they were hardly less noisy. Francesco rarely imposed silence on them. Absorbed in his occupation, the patient and melancholy artist was quite deaf to all the tumult of his noisy workshop; and provided that the work went on well, he never opposed a gaiety which delighted Valerio, and stimulated his ardour. Valerio was, in fact, the idol of his apprentices. Although he was continually spurring them on, and often in pretended anger, rallied them with facetious criticism; in reality, he loved them like his children, and charmed away all their fatigues by his continual vivacity. Every day he had some new and grotesque story to tell them, every day he had a new song more amusing than the last. Did one of them make a mistake, and endeavour to deny it through self-love, or defend it through obstinacy and ignorance, he made merriment at his expense, and sometimes daubed his face with his paint brush. But if an attentive pupil was sincerely sorry, or secretly blushed for an involuntary error, Valerio went to him, took his tools, and in a few minutes repaired the fault, encouraging him by kind words, or by keeping silence, that the mortified apprentice might not have the remarks of his comrades drawn down upon him. It may be truly said, that if Francesco was loved and respected, Valerio was adored, and that his apprentices would almost have thrown themselves from the tower of St. Mark, for his sake.

Bartolomeo Bozza, always cold and silent, was the only one who shared neither in this enjoyment nor enthusiasm. Francesco set great store by his work, which was always regular and solid, and on the correctness of his manners. His melancholy appeared a cause for sympathy, and he felt pleasure in fancying that this gloomy and mysterious youth concealed the future of a great artist. As for Valerio, although he found little that was agreeable in Bozza, yet his own disposition was kind enough to make him imagine in the other all the good qualities which he had himself.

Although Bozza was usually at his work even before the other apprentices, this morning he was more than an hour after sun sunrise. He was more pale and wan than usual, more silent and gloomy than they had ever known him.

He had not had a moment's sleep. All night he had wandered like a spectre through the dark and crooked streets, his hair hung straight over his hollow cheeks, his beard was in disorder, and the plume of his cap was broken by the winds. He took in silence his apron and his tools, and his place near Valerio, who was at work on the festoon of his arch. Francesco had noticed the tardy arrival of his apprentice, but Bozza was usually so exact, that the master avoided making any observation upon this fault, the first he had committed during the three years of his apprenticeship.

Valerio, always communicative, and prompted by kind solicitude, did not fear to question him.

"What is the matter, comrade?" said he, surveying him from head to foot with astonishment; "you look just as though you had been buried alive last night. Give me your hand, that I may know it is you, and not your ghost." Bozza pretended not to hear, and did not reply to this appeal of the friendly outstretched hand.

"Have you been gambling, Bartolomeo? Were you unlucky last night? Is it that which saddens you? Come, you must not mind it; as for money, do not think of that, you know my purse is yours."

Bozza did not reply.

"Ah well! perhaps it is not that; your mistress has deceived you, or you have ceased to love her, which is still worse. Never mind, you must make a beautiful Madonna, who shall resemble her, and whose kind looks will be eternally fixed on you. Perhaps you have an enemy, do you wish me to be your second in a duel? I am ready.'

"A great number of questions, truly, Messer Valerio," replied Bozza, in a low smothered, yet bitter tone. "Is it come to such a point, that for an hour's delay, your apprentices must suffer a regular cross-examination, and render an account of their conduct?"

"Oh!" cried Valerio, quite astonished, "you are in an ill-temper, my poor friend; I hope by and bye, when that fit is over, you will do more justice to my intentions." He went on with his labour, whistling, and Bozza commenced his with a delay and affectation of nonchalance, which Valerio would not gratify him by observing.

When two hours had passed, and Bozza saw that he had not succeeded in irritating Valerio, he changed his plan, and began working rapidly, without paying any attention to the materials he used, and confounding colour in the most *bizarre* and extravagant manner. Valerio looked furtively at him for some moments. He was muched astonished at his obstinacy, but as it was the first time such a thing had happened, he resisted his first feeling of anger, determining to do the work of his apprentice over again, saying to himself, "after all it is but a day lost for both of us."

But notwithstanding this generous resolution, and in spite of the efforts which the kind Valerio made to avoid even throwing a glance upon the misapplied labour at which Bozza was working away with so much bitterness, the very noise of his tool had something in it feverish and exciting, and the young master found it necessary to withdraw, if he did not wish to give way to the provocation of his apprentice. Valerio felt his conscience at ease, and Bozza's conduct appeared unnatural, and caused him more compassion than anger. Brave, but at the same time patient and generous as the lion, he quitted the scaffolding, put on his black silk robe, and went to breathe the fresh air a moment in the court of the cathedral adjoining the ducal palace, one of the most beautiful specimens of architecture in the world.

After a few turns, he thought himself calm enough to return to the gallery, but just as he approached the Giant's Stairs, he met Bozza, face to face. The same feeling of anguish which had devoured Valerio, whilst concealing his anger, had gnawed the bosom of Bozza, whilst endeavoring in vain to enrage his rival.

When Valerio left to free himself from this mute torture, his feelings had become so acute that he could not resist them. Each moment seemed an age, and suddenly carried away by an impulse of irresistible hatred, he followed Valerio's steps, and rejoined him on the spot where two hundred years afterwards the head of Marino Faliero fell under the axe. All Valerio's anger was at last excited, and the two young artists, immovable and with wild sparkling eyes, remained undecided for a few moments, each awaiting provocation from his adversary, like two mastiffs, growling furiously with bristling hair, ready to spring upon each other.

CHAPTER VII.

However gross were the artifices which Vincent Bianchini employed, the spirit of observation with which he was gifted by nature, and the perfect knowledge which he had of the follies and weaknesses of men, often served him better than the superior talents of others. He had a profound and irrevocable contempt for human nature. Denying the power of conscience, he hated mankind; no degree of corruption startled him, and a feeling of simple goodness never entered into his calculations. It is true that his unfavourable opinions were often justified, but it is equally true that as the storm-wind only breaks the tree whose sap no longer flows, and whose stalk has lost its vigor, so the wicked suggestions of Bianchini only triumphed over hearts where the sentiment of benevolence, the sap of life, flowed sparingly, and was interrupted in its course by the violence of contending passions. A feeling of cowardice prevented him from openly attacking the noble and generous. He was only acquainted with the dark side of human nature, and this mournful knowledge rendered him even rash in the exercise of his duplicity. His very daring to improvise so gross a lie, proved that he foresaw, that Bozza, by nature self-absorbed and distrustful, would never seek for an explanation. Bozza, without feeling the slightest love for deceit, hated frankness. His greatest torment was his enormous self-love, eternally being mortified, and eternally suffering. Bianchini well knew that every effort of his will was concentrated to conceal this weakness, and that the fear of betraying it, was what kept him taciturn, and incapable of all expansion in answering to any explanation which would have obliged him to lay bare any part of his secret soul. If he ever partially unbosomed himself to Francesco, it was because, observing his melancholy and fancying it arose from the same cause as his own, he mistrusted him less than any one else; but he was quite deceived; the melancholy under which Francesco laboured, although showing the same symptoms, was of quite another character. As for Valerio, not being able to understand him, Bozza took refuge in decoying him. He was persuaded that his happy indifference was a perpetual affectation assumed in order to gain friends and partisans, and to get on by the favour of the great, and it was this error which had caused Bianchini's *ruse* to succeed.

When Bozza found himself in the presence of Valerio, although not in the least cowardly, his courage vanished. The very wish he felt to reproach him, with his imagined conduct of the evening before, yielded to the fear of showing how much his pride was wounded at such a puerile offence; he felt that true dignity required him to despise or to seem to despise it, and suddenly repressing his anger outwardly, he reassumed his cold and disdainful air.

Valerio, much astonished at the sudden change in his attitude and physiognomy, broke silence first by asking what he wished to say to him.

"I wish to say, Messer," replied Bozza, "that you must seek another apprentice; I quit your school."

"Because?" asked Valerio, with the impatience of a frank disposition.

"Because I feel a wish to quit it," replied Bozza; "ask me no more,"

"And by informing me thus abruptly," demanded Valerio, "do you wish to wound me?"

"Not at all, Messer," replied Bozza, coldly.

"In that case," replied Valerio, exercising great control over his indignation, "you owe it to the friendship which I have always testified for you, to inform me of the reasons for your departure."

"There is no question about friendship here, Messer," said Bozza, with a bitter smile; "that is a thing not to be lavished, and a sentiment which cannot exist between you and me."

"Possibly you have never felt it for any one," said Valerio, much hurt, "but I felt it sincerely for you, and have given too many proofs of it for you to deny them."

"Yes, you have indeed given me proofs," returned Bozza, ironically, "which it will be difficult for me to forget."

Valerio, quite astonished, looked at him fixedly;

he could hardly believe in so much bitterness, and did not wish hastily to believe it the language of hatred.

"Bartolomeo," said he, hastily, "seizing his arm and drawing him into the galleries, "you have something on your mind; I must have given you offence involuntarily; if such is the case, I swear upon my honour that it was quite unintentional; and that I may prove my words, tell me what it is."

There was so much frankness in the accent of the young man, that the apprentice thought that it was possible Bianchini might have been playing on his credulity, but at the same time he felt more than ever the need of concealing his extravagant susceptibility, and the sentiment of his own weakness made the generous sincerity of Valerio more humiliating to him. His heart, closed to affection, felt no yearning to reply to these advances. "If Bianchini has lied to me," thought he, "if Valerio did not despise me this time he has despised me every day of his life, and he must despise me even now whilst offering his protecting friendship, and the pardon of a fault. Since I have so far spoken out, I must persist." For some time Bozza had disliked his association with the Zuccati, and resolved to break it.

"You have never offended me, Messer," replied he coldly. "Had you done so, I should not merely quit you, I should demand satisfaction."

"And I am ready to give it, if you persist in thinking so," said Valerio, who could not help being aware of the dissimulation of his pupil.

"There is no need of that, Messer; and to prove that if I do not seek a quarrel, it is not from any timidity, I will give you a reason for my departure which may very probably displease you a little."

"Say on," said Valerio, "the truth should always be told."

"It is then, Messer," said Bozza, in the most pedantic and contemptuous tone he could assume, "a question of art, and nothing more. Possibly this may make you smile; you who despise art, but I, who care for nothing else in the world, I must own to you that I am a man who could sacrifice the most agreeable connections to my desire of improvement, and of speedily becoming a master.

"I do not blame that," said Valerio, "but how am I any bar to your progress? Have I neglected to instruct you, and instead of employing you, as other masters would have done, in mere journeyman's work, have I not always treated you as an artist? Have I not furnished you with all possible means of progress, by confiding to you important and difficult works, and showing you the best methods, as though you had been my own brother?"

"I do not deny your complaisance," replied Bozza, "but though you may think me vain, I must confess to you, Messer, that the methods which to you seem the best, do not satisfy me at all. I do not only aspire to be the first in my art, but also to introduce into this art itself, as yet imperfect, a progress for the accomplishment of which I feel myself inspired. Permit me, therefore, to free myself from your system, and to follow my own. A voice within me commands me to do so. It appears to me that I am destined for something higher than to follow in the steps of any one. If I fail, do not regret me; if I succeed, you may depend upon my aid and my councils."

Valerio, who was too entirely destitute of vanity to feel that this speech was composed solely in the hope of mortifying him, repressed the great desire he felt to laugh. He had often perceived Bozza's extravagant self-love, and now he thought he must be under the influence of some delirious fantasy. This seemed to explain the agitation he had seen in him all the morning, and remembering how much suffering such a feeling brought with it, he was generous enough not to rally him openly. "But even then, my dear Bartolomeo," said he smiling, "it seems to me that you would be much more able to improve us, and that we should be in a better position for receiving your counsels, were you still to remain with us. As you are never interfered with in your work, nothing can prevent you from innovating and perfecting it at your leisure. If you cause our art to progress, I can safely promise that, far from hindering you, I shall be most happy to profit by it on my own account.

Bozza could not help feeling that, in spite of his complaisance, Valerio was rather mocking him. Vexed at having wished to be provoking, and only having been ridiculous, he lost all control over himself, and kept replying so sharply, that at last

Valerio lost all patience, and ended by saying, "Indeed, my dear friend, if that fine performance of yours this morning was the revelation of your genius, I should prefer art to retrograde in my hands, rather than to make such progress in yours."

"It is quite evident, Messer," said Bozza, irritated at seeing all his petty vengeance recoil upon himself, "that you were not duped by the pretexts which I thought of this morning as a cause for our separation. I wished to displease you, merely that I might be dismissed, and thus spare you the mortification of being quitted. I am sorry that you have not appreciated this generosity, and that you force me to say openly that I will not remain another hour in your school."

"And the true reason of your departure remains impenetrable?" asked Valerio.

"No one has any right to ask it," replied Bozza.

"I might force you to fulfil your engagement," said Valerio, "for your agreement was to labour under my direction until the ensuing St. Mark's day, but I do not choose to be served by constraint —Be free."

"I am ready, Messer," said Bozza, "to offer you any indemnity you require, and I fear nothing so much as remaining your debtor."

"You must however resign yourself to it, said Valerio, returning his parting salutation, for I am not much disposed to accept anything from you."

Thus the master and apprentice parted. Valerio watched him depart, and traversed the galleries in great agitation, and then suddenly struck with sorrow at the thought of so much coldness and ingratitude, he returned to his labour, his face bathed in tears.

Bozza, on the contrary, went to visit his mistress, and was kinder to her than usual. He felt quite light-hearted, almost gay. His heart seemed freed from a heavy load, the obligation of gratitude, always insupportable to the proud. He felt as though about to triumph over all the past, and to enter with flying colours upon the glorious independence of the future.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bozza was by no means an artist without merit. Far superior to the Bianchini, who were only skilful and diligent workmen, he had received from the Zuccati exact notions of design and colour. His outline was correct and elegant, his tone was not deficient in truth, and in rendering the brilliancy and richness of a stuff, perhaps he surpassed even Valerio himself. But if by study and perseverance he had succeeded in giving all the *material* effects of art, he was far from having stolen from heaven that sacred fire which gives life and being to the productions of art, and constitutes the superiority of genius over talent.

Bozza had too much intelligence, and had sought with too much anxiety the secret of this superiority in others, not to be aware of his own deficiency, and to labour assiduously to conquer it. But in vain did he try to communicate to his figures the touching grace, or sublime enthusiasm which animated those of the Zuccati. He succeeded only in representing physical emotion. In the scene from the Apocalypse, his figures of the condemned and the demons were extremely well executed; but there his triumph stopped; he had not been able to give to his emblems of hate and discord, the intellectual sentiment which ought always to characterize religious images.

The damned appeared to be tormented by the fierceness of the flames which devoured them; no feeling of hate or despair was expressed in their features, which were contracted only by fury. The rebel angels retained no trace of their divine origin. All regret for their lost grandeur seemed smothered by a frightful irony, and while contemplating their impure features, their ferocious mirth, their tortures which reminded one of the inquisition rather than the judgment of God, one felt less emotion than astonishment, less terror than disgust.

Notwithstanding these defects, appreciable only by superior intelligence, Bozza's work had good qualities, and the Zuccati were well aware of his power when they employed him. But whenever he attempted more noble subjects, he completely failed. His majestic movements were stiff, his inspired figures grimaced; in vain did his angels agitate their powerful and brilliant wings, their feet seemed invincibly fixed in the cement, and their looks had no other splendour than that of the enamel and marble.

The disappointed painters could not recognise their own ideas in the nevertheless faithful execution of their designs, and the Zuccati were forced to retouch laboriously all that in these figuers constituted the sentiment or the signification of the moral life. Since the scene from the Apocalypse had been finished, Bozza had therefore been employed on the great festoon of the arch, and, as he thought servilely copying ornaments was unworthy of him, he had suffered secretly all the agonies of humiliated pride. It had, however, been with gentleness and extreme delicacy that the Zuccati had pointed out the necessity of leaving sacred subjects for more skilful hands, and of finishing the details of the dome, whilst waiting till subjects fitted for his kind of talent were confided to their school. Bozza set little value on the private lessons of drawing and painting which the Zuccati gave him in their leisure hours. He thought nothing more important in the world than the care of his future glory, and secretly reproached Valerio for that love of pleasure which hindered all his spare moments from being dedicated to his improvement, and blamed Francesco for pursuing serious studies on his own account, which sometimes forced him to abridge his lesson or to put it off to the next day. He persuaded himself that his masters, fearing to be surpassed by him, deprived him of the means of rapid instruction, that they might profit longer by his work; and he gave himself up in his secret soul to all the misery of suspicion and resentment. At other times, and these instants were yet more cruel, he opened his eyes to conviction, and perceived that, notwithstanding the excellent lessons and the disinterested counsel given to him, he did not make the progress which he ought to have made; he felt bitterly all the defects of his work, and asked himself fearfully whether, allowing for a certain portion of talent, he was not doomed to be for ever powerless.

He understood what was wanting in him, but could not realize it. His hands always seemed to translate into the vulgar tongue, the lyrical aspirations of his brain ; and he almost believed in the jealous interference of infernal powers over his destiny. Valerio had often said to him, "The greatest obstacle to the developement of your faculties is the inquietude to which you give yourself up. Nothing grand or beautiful can bloom without the fertilizing breath of a warm heart and a free spirit. Health of body and soul are both necessary to produce a healthy work, and that which emanates from a sick brain has not the vitality of life. If instead of spending your nights dreaming of the delights of fame, you were to pass them happily with your beloved one; if instead of shedding the withering tears of *ennui*, you wept with tenderness and sympathy on the bosom of a friend; if in those hours when fatigue prevented you from working or discerning colours, instead of fatiguing your sight and wasting your energy, you would seek in the amusements of your age and the innocent pursuits of youth, a means of renewing the strength of the artist by giving it another direction for some time, I think you would be surprised on your return to work, to find your heart to beat strongly, and all your being transported with an unknown joy and a victorious hope. But you contrive to be always sad, always sinking under the burden of existence; how then can you expect to give to your work the vitality which is not in yourself? If you continue thus, all the resources of your genius will be destroyed before you have made use of them. By eternally contemplating the end and exaggerating the prize of the victory, you will forget the sweet sensations and the pure joys of the production. Art, in revenge for not having been loved for its own sake, will only reveal itself afar to your dazzled and deceived eyes; and if you happen by extravagancies to obtain the empty applause of the crowd, you will not feel in yourself the generous satisfaction of the conscientious artist; who smilingly contemplates the ignorance of his judges, and who consoles himself for his poverty provided he may shut himself up in a garret or a dungeon with his muse, and enjoy with her delights unknown to the vulgar." The unhappy artist felt the truth of these observations deeply, but instead of seeing that Valerio uttered them in the simplicity of his soul and with a sincere desire to put him into a good method, he attributed to him the unholy sentiment of a secret joy, and a cruel contempt at the sight of his sufferings. Discouraged and desperate, he exclaimed, "It is but too true, Valerio, I am lost; I am consumed as a torch blown about by the winds before I have cast my lustre or furnished my light. You know it well, and you do but probe the wound; you know the secret of your strength, and of my weakness. Triumph, then; humble me, despise my dreamings, destroy my hopes, ridicule even my desires. You have known how to employ your energy, you have guided the courser, you have conquered him. I,—I excite him unceasingly, and carried away by him, I shall be overcome by the first obstacle."

In vain did the two Zuccati endeavour to appease him and renew his hope; he repulsed their solicitude; and mortified by their compassion, concealed his unhappiness far from all regard and all consolation. Seeing that their friendly counsels served but to augment the suffering of his irritated spirit, the two young masters had gradually ceased to speak to him of himself; Bozza concluded therefrom that they loved him no longer, and that they were afraid of his profiting too much by their good advice. The unhappy necessity of abandoning a noble and interesting work, to finish by a given time trifling ornaments, had put the finishing stroke to his anger. He had come to the resolution of quitting them as soon as his engagement had expired, for he no longer hoped that they would propose him for the mastership, as they had the right to do at the end of their engagement with the Procurators. This privileg was only extended to one pupil in the year; and his young companions, Ceccato or Marini, seemed to him to be more highly estimated by the Zuccati than himself. He thought of going to Ferrara or to Bologna to propose himself as a master, and to form a school; for though one of the last at Venice, he might hope to be one of the first in a city less rich and less illustrious. His quarrel with Valerio had in his eyes, therefore, the double advantage of restoring him to liberty, and giving him the opportunity of revenge. The works were not yet completed, St. Mark's day was approaching; every instant was being counted. Both schools redoubled their adour not to be behindhand with their engagements. The absence or the departure of an apprentice was at this time a real loss, and seriously endangered the success of the unheard of efforts which had been made up to this time, not to be surpassed by the rival school.

CHAPTER IX.

It was not long before the Bianchini perceived the absence of Bozza, and the melancholy of Valerio. Vincent related his artifice of the previous evening to his two brothers with a brutal laugh; and all three encouraged by this first success, resolved to neglect nothing which might hinder the completion of the works in the great cupola, and thereby ruin the Zuccati. After holding a tavern consultation, therefore, Vincent sought for traces of Bozza, and found him towards night in those great orchards which extend along the Lagunes in the suburb of St. Clara. Bozza was slowly walking by the side of a green hedge intermingled with fruit trees, which drooped caressingly over the calm waters. Profound silence reigned over this leafy city, and the last tints of evening were fading slowly over the rustic steeple of the island of Certosa. On this side the *physiognomy* of Venice is at once as *naive* and pastoral as it is coquetish, proud, or terrible in other situations. Nothing touches there but boats full of herbs or fruit; there is no noise but that of a gardener's rake, the spinning wheel of the women sitting in the midst of their children round the hot houses, or the convent clocks sounding the hours with clear and almost woman-like tone, with nothing to interrupt their long and melancholy vibration. There, in other days, came Childe Harold, seeking an explanation of those secrets of nature, grace, mildness, charm, repose; mysterious words, which nature, powerless or pitiless for him, translated into languor, sadness, *ennui*, despair. There Bozza, insensible to the benign influences of the delicious evening, was watching the rapid flight and desperate combats of the great sea-birds, who every evening disputed for their last chance of prey, or hastened to arrive at their secret haunts. This spectacle of combat and inquietude was the only one in which he felt any sympathy. Every where the conquered seemed to him a personification of his rivals; and when the conqueror screamed forth his cry of rage and triumph, he could have imagined himself rising on those vast pinions towards the object of his insatiable desires.

Bianchini accosted him first with a great affectation of frankness, and after telling him that for some time he had perceived the evil inventions of the Zuccati towards him, begged to know, under the seal of secresy, whether he had definitively made up his mind to quit their school.

"There needs no secresy on the point," said Bartolomeo; "it is not only a thing resolved upon, but a thing done."

Bianchini expressed his pleasure with some reserve, and assured Bozza that he might have stopped ten years with the Zuccati without the least chance of a mastership, and cited the example of Marini, who was a young man of talents, and had worked with them for six years, with no other recompense than a modest salary, and the title of "companion." "Marini flatters himself," said he, "that he will become a 'master' on the next St. Mark, according to the promise of Messer Francesco Zuccato, but—"

"Did he promise him positively?" said Bozza, his eyes sparkling.

"In my presence," said Vincent. "Perhaps they promise you the same thing. Oh! promises cost nothing to the Zuccati; they treat their apprentices as they treat the Procurators, with more words than deeds. They have plenty of fine speeches to explain to their dupes, that art demands a long noviciate: that it ruins an artist, even in his prime, to deliver him to the caprices of his own imagination; that the greatest talents often fail by being too soon freed from the servile copy of models, etc. In fact, what will they not say? They learned by heart in their father's studio, when he had a studio, five or six wise sayings, which they had heard from Titian or Giorgione, and now they fancy themselves masters in painting, and speak like oracles. Really it is so ridiculous, that I cannot help wondering how your great Devil in the Apocalypse, that *morceau* so perfect in itself, so comically treated, so well horned, and so good humoured, that I can never look at him without laughing, does not detach himself from the wall, and give them with his lion's tail a good box on the ears when they preach doctrines so ridiculous, and so out of place in their mouths—"

Although Bozza was mortified by this vulgar praise bestowed upon his 'choicest *morceau*,' a figure which he had designed to render terrible and not grotesque, yet he felt a secret joy to hear the Zuccati ridiculed and depreciated. When Bianchini believed he had gained his confidence by soothing his mortification, he offered to take him into his school, and promised him a very superior salary to that which he had received from the Zuccati, but he was surprised by the only reply being a refusal, and by not seeing the least sign of satisfaction upon Bozza's countenance. He believed that the young apprentice merely held back to obtain higher terms. Bianchini could conceive no other aim in the life of an artist, no other hope, no other glory, than gold. After vainly trying to tempt him by large offers, Vincent renounced the desire of engaging him, and assuming a totally disinterested manner, he endeavoured, whilst flattering and conversing with him, to penetrate the cause of his refusal, and the hidden objects of his ambition. This was not difficult. Bozza, so suspicious and reserved, that the most generous friendship could never draw from him the secret of his weakness, yielded like a child to the seductions of the grossest flattery; praise was to him like the air he breathed, deprived of which he must suffer and die.

When Bianchini saw that his only thought was to obtain a mastership, and to enjoy its privileges, the authority, the independence, and the title, even if he derived no profit from his labours, and even suffered many privations, he conceived a profound contempt for this ambition, at any rate less ignoble than his own, and would have ridiculed it openly if he had not imagined that he could still use him against the Zuccati.

"Ah! my young master," said he to him, "you wish to order and not to serve. That's simple enough, and I can easily understand it in a man of talent like you. Well, that's right: you must become a master, but not in a little miserable provincial town, where you may sweat night and day for twenty years without any one's hearing of you. You must pass master at Venice; nay, at this very St. Mark, and supplant and replace the Zuccati."

"That is easier said than done," said Bozza; "the Zuccati are all-powerful.

"Perhaps not so much so as you think," replied Vincent. "Will you promise to trust me, and aid me in all my designs? I will give you my word that before six months are over, the Zuccati shall be driven from Venice; and we two, you and I, will be absolute masters in the cathedral."

Vincent spoke with so much assurance, and he was known for a man so persevering, so skilful, and so fortunate in his enterprizes; he had escaped so many perils, and repaired so many disasters, where every body else would have been ruined, that Bozza felt an emotion of pleasure pass over him, and the perspiration stood on his forehead, as though the sun instead of setting were rising from the sea, and darting its fiercest rays upon him.

Bianchini seeing that he was conquered took his arm, and drawing him away, said: "Come, I will show you with your own eyes, an infallible means of ruining our enemies; but you must swear not to be overtaken by any emotion of weak sensibility, and not to ruin my projects. Your testimony is absolutely necessary to me. Are you certain not to draw back from any of the consequences of the truth, however painful they may be to your former master?"

"Where will these consequences stop?" said Bozza, astonished.

"Short of life only," said Bianchini; "they will involve banishment, dishonour, and misery."

"I will not lend myself to it," said Bozza, moving away from the tempter. "The Zuccati are honest people after all, and I cannot carry anger to hatred. Leave me, Messer Vincent, you are a bad man?"

"It appears so to you," replied Vincent, without being moved by an accusation at which he had long ceased to blush. "This startles you, because you believe in the honour of the Zuccati. That looks well, and shows great *naivette* on your part; but if one could prove to you, and that by your own eyesight, that they are men without honour, who cheat the republic, wasting its revenues, stealing their salary, and adulterating their materials; if I made you see this, what would you say? And, if after having made you see it, I summoned you to give evidence of it, what would you do?"

"If my own eyes saw it, I would say that the Zuccati were the greatest hypocrites and liars I had ever known; and if in that case I was summoned to give testimony, I would do it, for they would have infamously duped me; and also, because I already hate those who set themselves over others too much not to abhor those who do it at the expense of truth. But they, liars and cheaters! I cannot believe it, though I would even wish it, that I might have the right to say to their face, 'You have no right to despise me!'"

"Follow me," said Bianchini, with a malignant smile; the night is dark; and besides, we may enter the cathedral at all times without exciting suspicion. Follow me, and if your courage does not fail, in six month's time you will ornament the highest point of the cupola with a great yellow devil, who will laugh more than all the others, and will be worth a hundred golden ducats to you."

Speaking thus, he glided under the sweet scented alleys, and Bozza followed, treading on the borders of thyme and fennel, and trembling as though about to commit a great crime.

CHAPTER X:

The next day saw Bozza in the school of the Bianchini, working with ardour at the chapel of St. Isidore. Francesco, to whom his brother had related exactly the occurrence of the evening before, was so bitterly wounded by this conduct that he entreated Valerio not to make any new attempt to discover its motives. He suffered in silence, and resenting an injury offered to his beloved brother, far more than one offered to himself, and not being able to conceive that any one could resist the frankness and kindness of an explanation given by Valerio, he pretended not even to see Bozza, and from this time passed him by, as though he had never known him. Valerio, who knew how much his brother had it at heart to finish his cupola, and who saw the anxiety caused by Bozza's desertion, resolved to work himself to death rather than not surmount this difficulty. Francesco's health was delicate, and his proud and sensitive soul suffered much from the fear of failing in his engagements. He was now thinking not merely of his glory as an artist, a glory upon which he reproached himself with having dwelt too much; he was behindhand even in the manual part of the work, and he was not ignorant of the intrigues already entered into by the Bianchini to blacken his reputation. When he had first accepted this enormous undertaking, his father, thinking it too laborious to be finished in the three years to which its accomplishment was limited, endeavoured to dissuade him. Titian judging that the gay life of Valerio, and the feeble health of Francesco rendered its execution impossible, had often advised them to reconcile themselves with the Bianchini, and to demand a new engagement from the Procurators. But the Bianchini, who at first had formed a part of the school of the Zuccati, had but little talent and an insupportable pride. Nothing in the world would have induced Francesco to confide to them an enterprise, undertaken and conducted with so much care and love.

To understand why this artist considered it so important not to be a single day too late, we must go back a little, and state that the Cathedral of St. Mark had for some years been experimented upon by unskilful and dishonest workmen. Considerable sums expended had only served to support a troop of debauched artisans, whose work had been obliged to be redone. Father Alberto and Rizzo, the chief master Mosaists, had shown the Procurators the necessity of regulating the work and the expences. After many trials, Francesco Zuccato had been appointed chief of the Cathedral workshops, and Vincent Bianchini, although he had been banished fourteen years for coining and for having committed several assassinations, especially one upon his barber, had, thanks to his industry and to that of his brothers, been protected by the Procurator Melchior, who had placed him under the orders of the Zuccati. But any kind of harmony between these two families was impossible. Francesco had demanded permission to choose other pupils, and he had obtained it. To put an end to the quarrels emanating therefrom, and to appease the Procurator who had interested himself for the Bianchini, the Commissioners had decided to take upon trust their capability to work upon their own account. A less favourable position, and a longer task had been confided to them than to the Zuccati; they themselves had insisted upon these conditions, and demanded this proof of their talents. Since then, they had unceasingly boasted of themselves to the Commissioners, who, to say the least, were any thing but enlightened upon the matter, and depreciated the school of Francesco, whose modesty and candour furnished them with weapons. The Commissioners made it a point of honour to expend less upon these well conducted works than had been done upon the former, and wished upon the inauguration of the redecorated church, to merit praise and recompense from the Senate.

Francesco saw this fatal day approach ; in vain he wore himself out with labour, hope began to abandon him. He saw Valerio, insensible to anxiety, still persist in his intention of celebrating on that very day the institution of a "Company of Pleasure." The departure of Bozza at such a critical moment filled him with consternation.

Even, thought he, 'if Valerio were to give himself entirely up to his labour, that would not do much. Let him amuse himself then, since he is happy enough to be insensible to the shame of a failure.'

But Valerio's views were very different. He knew too well the chivalric susceptibility of his brother, not to feel that he would be inconsolable under such a mortification. He assembled his favourite pupils, Ceccato, Marini, and two others; explained to them the state of Francesco's mind, and the position of their school in public opinion. He entreated them to follow his example, not to despair, to renounce neither business nor pleasure, but to stand to their task, even if they were to perish the very day after St. Mark. All swore enthusiastically to second him unceasingly, and all kept their word. In order not to alarm Francesco, who was always uneasy about the little care Valerio took of his health, they covered up with planks each portion as it was finished, and worked hard every night. A light mattress was thrown upon the scaffolding, and if any one was overcome by fatigue, he threw himself down, and tasted a few minutes' repose, interrupted by the joyous songs of the others, and the creaking of the boards beneath their feet. They bore all their fatigues gaily, and declared they had never slept better than when rocked by the motion of the scaffolding, and lulled by the sound of the beetles. The inextinguishable gaity of Valerio, his amusing stories, his merry songs, and the great pitcher of Cyprus wine which went the round, kept up a wonderful ardour. Their zeal was crowned with success. The eve of Saint Mark arrived just as the day's work was done, and Francesco, in order to avoid the appearance even of a mute reproach to his brother, was affecting a resignation foreign to his feelings. Valerio gave the signal. The pupils carried away the planks, and the master saw the festoon, and the beautiful cherubim which supported it, finished as if by magic.

"Oh, my dear Valerio," cried Francesco, transported with joy and gratitude, "was not I well inspired to give wings to your portrait? Are you not my guardian spirit, my liberating angel?"

"I had it at heart to show you," said Valerio, returning his embrace, "that I could manage pleasure and business both at once. If you are pleas-with me, I am repaid, but you must also embrace these brave companions who have so well seconded me, and who by their efforts have rendered themselves all worthy of the mastership; it now remains for you to choose, I do not say the most skilful, for they are all alike, but the first in point of seniority."

"Dear and good friends," said Francesco, after cordially embracing them, "some time since you made the generous sacrifice of your rights and your desires in favour of a young man devoured by ambition, whose talents and sufferings seemed to you worthy of interest and compassion. You intended to prove to him that he accused you wrongfully of being his rivals and his enemies.

More attached to my instructions than to the vain glory of which he was so ambitious, you were upon the point of giving him a great example of virtue and generosity, by yielding your claims to the mastership voluntarily and contrary to his expectations. The ungrateful one has not waited for this happy day, when he would have been forced to admire and love you. He has, coward-like, deserted masters whom he could not comprehend, and companions whom he could not appreciate. Forget him; he who loses you is sufficiently punished; where will he find friendship more sincere, or services more disinterested? Now a right of mastership is at your disposal, as it is in my gift, and I have no other will than yours. God preserve me from having to make a choice between pupils whom I esteem and love so tenderly. Choose therefore among yourselves. He amongst you, who has the most votes, will have mine."

"The choice will not take us long," said Marini; "we foresaw, dear master, that you would do as in preceding years, and we have already made our election. I have obtained the majority of the suffrages of the school. Ceccato has given me his vote, and I am elected. But this choice is the effect of injustice or error. Ceccato works better than I; he has a wife and two children; he needs and has a right to the mastership; as for me, I am in no haste, I have no family, I am happy under your directions; I have yet much to learn; I yield all my votes to Ceccato, I give him my own, and beg you master to add yours."

"Embrace me, my brother," cried Francesco, pressing Marini in his arms. "This noble action heals the wound which Bartolomeo's ingratitude had made in my heart. Yes, there still are among artists great souls, and noble motives. Blush not, Ceccato, to accept this generous sacrifice; in Marini's place, we all know you would have acted as he has done. Be as proud as though you were the hero of the evening. He who inspires such a friendship, is the equal of him who feels it."

Ceccato, bathed in tears, threw himself into Marini's arms, and Francesco undertook to go directly to the Procurator's, in order that they might ratify the mastership annually given to one of his pupils, in conformity to his agreement with the magistrates. "We will wait for you at table," said Valerio, "for after so much fatigue we have need of repose. Hasten to join us brother, for I am obliged to pass half the night in preparing at San Filippo for the joyous affairs of to-morrow, and I cannot quit the supper-table without touching glasses with you."

CHAPTER XI.

As Francesco mounted the grand staircase in the Procurator's palace, he met Bozza descending, pale and absorbed in thought. On finding himself face to face with his late master, Bozza trembled and was evidently uneasy. When Francesco looked at him with the severity which was natural in such a meeting, his countenance changed suddenly, and his pale lips moved as if he were vainly trying to speak. He made a step as though to approach his master, and a movement as throw to salute him. Devoured by remorse, Bozza would have given his life at this instant, to throw himself at Francesco's feet and confess everything; but his cold manner, and the withering look which he threw upon him, and the evident care he took to avoid his salute, by turning his head, as soon as he saw Bozza carry his hand towards his cap, prevented his having the strength of an opportune repentance. He stopped, in doubt, hoping that Francesco might turn round and give a more encouraging glance; but, when he saw he was decidedly condemned and abandoned, "Be it so!" said he, clenching his fist with rage and despair; and with hurried steps he went away, and shut himself up with his mistress, who could win neither word nor look from him during the whole evening.

Francesco went first to the Procurator-Cashier, who was the head of the commission, and was much surprised at finding there Vincent Bianchini seated in a familiar attitude, and discoursing in a loud voice. He however stopped as soon as he saw Francesco, and went into the next room, which was also one of the interior apartments of the same suit. The Procurator Melchoir was frowning and assuming an austerity of manner to which his short and coarse featured face, his protuberant stomach and nasal intonations gave a character more comic than imposing. But Francesco was not a man to be imposed upon by this learned assumption; he saluted him, and said that he was happy to be able to announce to him the conclusion of the cupola, and that in consequence—but the Procurator left him no time to finish his sentence.

"Indeed! we are there," said he, looking at him fixedly, with the evident intention of intimidating him; "that is wonderful, Messer Zuccato: that is well. Perhaps you will have the goodness to tell me how it has been so quickly brought about?"

"So quickly, Monsignor? It seems to me very slowly, for this is the eve of the day appointed, and even this morning I feared it would not be finished in time."

"And your fear was reasonable, for yesterday there was still a quarter of your festoon to do, which would have needed a month of ordinary labour."

"That is true," said Francesco, "I see that your Signiory is conversant with the least details."

"A man like myself, Messer," said the Procurator, emphatically, "knows the duty of his office, and does not allow himself to be imposed upon by a man like you."

"A man like yourself, Signor," said Francesco, surprised at this petulance, "ought to know that a man like myself is incapable of imposing upon any one."

"Lower your tone, Messer, lower your tone," cried the Procurator, "or by the ducal cap, I will make you silent long enough."

The Procurator Melchoir having the honour of counting among his great uncles, a doge of Venice, was in the habit of thinking that he was a little bit of the doge himself, and of swearing always by the ducal head-gear, which, in the shape of a Phrygian cap, or horn of plenty, was the august ensign of the ducal dignity.

"I see your Signiory is not disposed to listen to me," said Francesco, in a gentle, though slightly contemptous tone, "I will retire for fear of displeasing you more, and wait a more favourable moment to—"

"To demand the wages of your idleness and bad faith?" cried the Procurator. "The salary of those who rob the Republic is under the Leads, Messer, and take care that you are not rewarded according to your merits."

"I am quite ignorant of any cause for such a menace," replied Francesco, "and I think your

Signiory has too much wisdom and experience to wish to profit by the impossibility of my repelling any injustice from such a quarter. The respect I owe to your age and dignity seals my lips, but I shall not be equally patient with the slanderers who have injured me in your estimation."

"By the ducal cap, this is no place to play the bully in, Messer. Think rather of justifying yourself than of accusing others."

"I will justify myself before your Signiory, and to your entire satisfaction, when you will deign to tell me of what I am accused."

"You are accused Messer, of having unworthily tricked the Procurators, by calling yourself a mosaist. You are a painter, Messer, and nothing else. Well, by my great uncle's cap, that is a fine talent! I congratulate you. But you were not engaged to make frescoes, and we shall see what yours are worth."

"On my honour I swear, that I am not happy enough to understand your Signiory."

"*Mordieu*, you will be soon made to understand me, and until then, do not hope to receive your salary. Ah! ah! Messer painter, you had much reason to say, Messer Melchoir understands nothing of what we are about. He is a good soul, who is better employed drinking, than directing the fine arts of the Republic. Very well, very well, Messer, you see the pleasantries of your brother and companions on the worshipful body of Magistrates are known. But those laugh best who laugh last! We shall see what figure you will make, when we examine this fine composition ourselves; and you will soon see that our knowledge is at least sufficient to distinguish enamel from paint, and pasteboard from stone."

Francesco could not repress a smile of contempt.

"If I comprehend rightly the accusation brought against me," said he, "I am guilty of having substituted a portion of painted pasteboard for enamel. It is true, I have done something of the sort as to the Latin inscription which your Signiory had ordered to be placed over the principal exterior door. I thought perhaps your Signiory had not taken the trouble of correcting this inscription too flattering to us yourself, and had confided it to some one, who has done it hastily. I therefore allowed myself to correct the word *saxibus.* But faithful to the obedience I owe to the respectable Procurators, I have preserved, in the stone work beneath, the word just as it came to me from their hands, and only permitted my brother to correct it on a piece of pasteboard fastened over the stone. If your Signiory thinks I have done wrong, it is easy to take away the pasteboard, and the text will appear underneath, copied faithfully, as you may verify by your own eyes."

"Better and better, Messer," cried the Procurator, beside himself with anger. "You are exposing yourself truly: and this is a proof against you, of which I shall take notice. Ho, there, let my secretary take a note of this avowal. By the ducal cap, Messer, we will lower your insolent crest. What! you pretend to correct the Procurators! They understand Latin rather better than you! Just look here! what a prodigy of learning. Who could have expected such a variety of talents. I had better apply for the Latin professorship for you at the university of Padua, for to be sure you are too great a genius to be confined to mosaic work."

"If your Signiory is so much attached to your barbarism," replied Francesco, impatiently, "I can remove the piece of pasteboard immediately. The whole Republic will know to-morrow that the Procurators do not pride themselves upon their good latinity; but after all, what does that matter to me?"

Speaking thus, he went towards the door, whilst the Procurator kept shouting to him to get out of his presence, and order he did not wait to have repeated, for he felt he was losing all self command.

Hardly had he left the room, when Vincent Bianchini, who being in the next room, had overheard all, entered hastily.

"Monsignor!" said he, "what are you doing? you warn him that his fraud is discovered, and yet you let him depart!"

"What would you have me do?" replied the Procurator. "I have refused his salary, and given him a severe mortification. That is punishment enough for to-day. After to-morrow, we will commence proceedings against him."

"And during these two nights," said Bianchini, emphatically, he will get into the cathedral and replace all the pieces of pasteboard by pieces of enamel, so correctly, that I shall seem to have made a false deposition, and all my devotion to the Republic will turn against myself!"

"And how would you have me prevent his evil intentions," said the Procurator, alarmed! "I can close the cathedral."

"You cannot do that, on account of St. Mark's day—the cathedral will be crowded with people, and who knows by what means he can get into the most securely closed building. And then, he will join his companions, come to an understanding with them, get up excuses..... All is over, and I am lost, if you do not act with vigour immediately."

"You are right Bianchini, we must act directly, but how?"

"Say but a word, send two officers after him; he is not yet at the bottom of the staircase, throw him into prison."

"By the ducal cap! that idea never entered my head.... but Vincent, that is indeed severe, to use such an act of authority...."

"But Monsignor, if you let him escape, he will ridicule you all his life, and his brother the wit, who is such a favourite with all those young patricians, who are so jealous of your wisdom and power, will load you with caricatures."

"You speak well, dear Vincent," cried the Procurator, ringing his bell violently. "The ducal dignity must be respected.... You know I am of a ducal family myself!"

"And you will be Doge some day, I hope." said Bianchini. "All Venice expects to see the ducal cap upon your head. . . . ."

The officers were despatched. Five minutes afterwards, the melancholy Francesco, without knowing by what authority, or in punishment of what fault, was conducted with bandaged eyes across a labyrinth of galleries, courts, and staircases, towards the dungeon destined for him. He stopped a moment on his mysterious route, and from the noise of waters underneath, he knew he was crossing the Bridge of Sighs. His heart sank within him, and the name of Valerio faltered on his lips, as an eternal farewell.

CHAPTER XII.

Valerio waited for his brother at the tavern, until, hurried away by the young men who came to seek him, he was obliged to relinquish all hope of touching glasses with him, and the new 'master' Ceccato.

Full of cares and commissions for the *fete* of the next day, he passed half the night in running from his workshop to the square of St. Mark, where the preparations were being made for the game of running at the ring—and thence to the different tradesmen and artificers who were employed on this occasion. In these short journeys, he was accompanied by his gallant apprentices and many other young men of different trades, who were all devoted to him, and whom he employed to carry messages from one part to another. Whenever the merry band resumed their progress, it was to the sound of song and laughter, joyous preludes of the pleasures of the morrow.

Valerio did not return home before three o'clock in the morning. He was surprised not to find his brother, but yet he did not feel much disquieted. Francesco had an attachment, which he rather neglected, whilst art, his dominant passion, occupied all his time, but for which he often absented him self when his undertakings allowed him a little respite. Valerio was not of a character to fancy evil, the mere apprehension of which weakens the courage of many men. He went to sleep, feeling certain of meeting his brother at San Filippo the next morning, or at the first place of meeting for the joyous members of the Lizard.

It is generally known that in the days of its splendour the republic of Venice, besides the numerous organized bodies which maintained its laws, recognized also a crowd of private companies approved of by the senate; devout associations encouraged by the clergy, and joyous clubs tolerated and indulged in secret by a government always anxious to maintain the activity of the working classes, as well as a taste for luxury. The devout or religious associations were often composed of a single corporation, when that was rich enough to bear the expense, for instance that of the merchants, the tailors, the bombardiers, etc. Others were composed of the artisans or shopkeepers of a single parish, and assumed its name, as, St. Jean Eleemosynary, The Madona of the garden, St. George of the sea-weed, St. Francis of the vine, etc.—Each brotherhood had a building, which they called their school, and which they decorated at their common expense with the works of the greatest painters, sculptors, and architects. These schools were generally composed of a lower room called the Albergo, where the brethren usually assembled, of an ornamented staircase, in itself a sort of museum, and of a vast hall or saloon, where mass was said and conferences held

Many of these *schools* still remain in Venice, either preserved by the government as monuments of art, or become the property of individuals. That of St. Mark is at present the museum of painting in the town; that of St. Roche contains several *chef-d'œuvres* of Tintoretto and other illustrious masters. Mosaic pavements, ceilings beautifully gilded or ornamented with frescoes by Veronese or Pordenone, wainscots beautifully sculptured in wood or bronze, light yet minute bas-reliefs where the whole history of Christ or of some favourite saint is executed in white marble with an inconceivable detail and finish; such are the vestiges of the power and wealth to which aristocratic republics may attain, but under the excess of which they are infallibly doomed to perish.

Besides the *fete* day of the saint, honoured by each corporation or brotherhood, called *segra*, and on which they displayed all their splendour, they had the right of appearing at all the banquets and solemnities of the republic, adorned with the insignia of their different associations.

At the procession of St. Mark, they took their parochial rank; that is to say, they followed the clergy of their church, carrying their shrines, crosses, and banners, and placing themselves in chapels reserved for them during the offices of religion. The merely joyous brotherhoods had not the same privileges, but they were permitted to assemble in the great square, to erect their tents and establish their jousts and banquets. Each company chose its title and emblem according to its fancy, and recruited where it chose; some were composed entirely of patricians, others were indiscriminately noble and plebeian, favoured by the apparent mixture of rank, which is still evident in Venice. The old paintings have preserved many of the elegant yet *bizarre* costumes of the *compagni de la calza* who wore one white and one red stocking, and the rest of their dress variegated with the most brilliant colours. The company of St. Mark wore a golden apron on the breast, that of St. Theodoseus a silver crocodile on the arm, etc.

Valerio Zuccato, celebrated for his exquisite taste and skill in inventing and executing such devices, had himself directed everything connected with the exterior decorations, and it might truly be said, that in this respect the company of the Lizard excelled every other. He had chosen this climbing animal as his emblem, because all the trades who had yielded their choicest members to him, architects, sculptors, glass blowers, painters on glass, mosaists, and fresco painters, were by the very nature of their labours, in the habit of working and existing, so to speak, climbing or suspended to the panels of walls and dones.

On the day of St. Mark, 1570, according to Stringa, and 1574, according to other authors, the immense procession took its way through St. Mark's square under the arcades of tents erected for this occasion outside the stone galleries of the Procurators' palace, which were too low to yield a passage to the enormous golden crosses, the gigantic chandeliers, the shrines of *lapis lazuli* surmounted by beautifully sculptured silver lilies, the reliquaries crowned in a pyramidal form by precious stones; in a word, all that ruinous paraphernalia of which priests are so zealous, and the citizens of the corporations so vain. As soon as the religious sons were engulphed by the yawning doors of the cathedral, and whilst the poor and the children collected the drops of perfumed wax which fell upon the pavement from the thousands of wax tapers, or greedily sought for any gem or pearl dropped from the sacred jewels, there was seen to arise, as if by magic, in the middle of the square, a large circus, surrounded by wooden galleries, beautifully decorated with variegated festoons and silken draperies, under which the ladies could seat themselves and view the games, sheltered from the heat of the sun. The pillars which supported these galleries were covered with flags, on which might be read gallant devices in the *naive* and witty Venetian dialect. In the midst of the circus rose a colossal pillar in the shape of a palm tree, up the stalk of which were climbing a crowd of beautiful lizards, gold, silver, green, blue, striped, infinitely varied; at the summit of the pillar a beautiful white-winged genius bent towards this agile troop, holding a crown in each hand. At the foot of the tree, upon a platform of cramoisy velvet, under a dais of brocade ornamented by the most ingenius arabesques, sat the queen of the *fete*, the giver of the prize, the young Marietta Robusti, the daughter of Tintoretto, a beautiful girl about twelve years of age, whom Valerio delighted to call the lady of his heart, and towards whom he displayed the most tender care and gallant attentions. When the seats were all occupied, she appeared, clothed like one of Gian Bellini's Angels, in a white tunic, a light blue drapery, and an elegant wreath of vine leaves on her beautiful fair hair, which fell in thick golden curls upon her alabaster neck. She was conducted by Messer Orazio Vecelli, Titian's son, who was dressed in the Eastern fashion, as he had just arrived from Byzantium with his father. He seated himself near her, as did also a numerous group of young people distinguished either by their talents or birth, for whom places of honour had been reserved upon the seats of the dais. The galleries were filled with magnificently dressed ladies attended by their cavaliers. In a vast place reserved for them, many dignified persons did not disdain to seat themselves, the Doge set the example; he accompanied the young duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III. of France, who was then passing through Venice. Luigi Mocenigo (the doge) had it at heart to do, as it may be said, the honours of the city, and to display to his eyes, accustomed to the more vigorous enjoyments, and more savage feasts of the Sarmatians, the dazzling luxury, and the delightful gaiety of the brilliant youth of Venice.

When all were ready a purple curtain was raised, and the gallant companions of the Lizard issuing from a tent which had been closed until then, appeared in a square phalanx, having at their head, musicians clothed in the grotesque fashion of ancient times, and in the midst their chief, Valerio. They advanced in good order in front of the Doge and senators. The ranks opened, and Valerio taking the banner of red satin, upon which the silver Lizard shone, separated himself from the troop, and saluted with bended knee the chief of the Republic. A murmur of admiration greeted the handsome cavalier, whose strange, yet magnificent costume displayed his elegant and graceful figure. He was clothed in a close-fitting dress of green velvet with large slashed sleeves, open at the bosom to show a corselet of Smyrna stuff, embroidered with silken flowers, most admirably coloured; on his left thigh he bore the escutcheon of the company, the Lizard embroidered in pearls upon a ground of cramoisy velvet; his buckler was a *chef-d'œuvre* of arabesque, and his poignard, enriched with precious stones, was a gift to him, brought by Titian from the east; a superb plume of white feathers fastened to his cap by a diamond *agreſſe* fell to his waist, and waved with every movement like the majestic crest, which the Chinese pheasant raises or depresses with so much grace at every step.

For one moment joy at his success, and natural youthful pride beamed upon the young man's animated countenance, and his sparkling glance wandered over all the seats, and met all eyes fixed on him. Soon, however, this fugitive joy gave place to deep inquietude; his eyes wandered searchingly through the crowd, yet found not the one he sought. Valerio smothered a sigh and returned to his company, where he remained absorbed in thought, insensible to the gaiety around him, deaf to the noise of the *fete*, and with a cloud upon his brow. Francesco, notwithstanding his promise to present the banner himself to the Doge, had not yet made his appearance.

CHAPTER XIII.

The brilliant company of the Lizard made the tour of the square three times, amidst the applause of the spectators, who were surprised, and not without reason, at the fine figures and high bearing apparent in these young champions. In accordance with the regulations of the company, it was requisite, in order to be admitted, that the candidate should be of a certain height, have no deformity, not be above forty years of age, and belong to a respectable family, so as not to carry branded on his brow any of those degrading hereditary signs, which perpetuate the outward indications of vice from generation to generation, under the form of physical ugliness Every applicant was obliged to prove his good health, his truth and loyalty, by drinking freely on the day of trial. Valerio's idea was, that a good workman ought to be able to bear wine without being inconvenienced by it, and that an honourable man would have nothing to fear either for his own or his friends' reputation from the involuntary sincerity of drunkenness. It is curious to look at some of the statutes of this bacchic constitution.

"No one to be admitted, who, after drinking six measures of Cyprus wine, shall become idiotic."

"No one to be admitted who at the seventh measure shall babble anything to the detriment of a friend or companion."

"No one to be admitted who at the eighth measure shall betray the secret of his love, and tell the name of his mistress."

"No one to be admitted who at the ninth measure shall betray the confidence of a friend."

"No one to be admitted who at the tenth measure shall not stop and refuse to drink more."

It would be difficult now to determine the size of this measure of Cyprus wine, but if we judge of it by the weight of the armour they wore at the combat, of which formidable specimens remain in our museums, it is likely that it would make the most intrepid drinkers of the present day draw back.

The companions of the Lizard wore, like their chief, a green doublet, and the rest of their dress white and close-fitting; but they wore an upper robe of yellow silk, a scarlet plume, and a black and silver shield.

When the company had promenaded and shown their banners and costumes sufficiently, they re-entered the tent, and twenty couple of horses appeared in the area. The introduction of these noble animals at festivals was a luxury much admired in Venice, and, as if the eyes of a people but little accustomed to see them, could not be satisfied by reality, they were often metamorphosed by means of strange costumes into fantastic animals. Their skin was painted, false tails of foxes, bulls, or lions, were attached to them, some had birds, crests on their heads, others gilded horns, and others masks of fabulous animals. Those displayed by the company of the Lizard were handsomer, and consequently less extravagantly travestied than was usual at that time. Nevertheless, some were disguised as unicorns by a long silver horn attached to the front of their bridle, others had brilliant dragons, or stuffed birds, upon their heads, some were painted rose colour, some turquoise blue,apple green, or scarlet; others were striped like zebras, or spotted like panthers, and others bore imitations of the gilded scales of the great monsters of the deep. Each couple of horses, similarly harnessed, entered the lists, conducted by a Moresco, or little black slave, fantastically dressed, walking between the two animals, who caracoled spiritedly to the sound of trumpets, and the enthusiastic acclamations of the crowd.

Valerio alone directed by a purer taste, appeared upon a Turkish horse, white as snow, and of remarkably beauty, who bore only a simple housing of tiger's skin. Broad silver bands supplied the place of reins, and his long mane, carefully mixed with silver threads, was plaited, and at the end of each tress hung a pomegranate flower beautifully carved in silver, his shoes were silvered over, and his magnificent tail lashed his noble sides in perfect freedom. Like his master, he bore the escutcheon of the company, the silver lizard on a ground of cramoisy, painted with great care on the left thigh, and as he had the honour of bearing the chief, he was the only horse decorated by the escutcheon.

Valerio ordered the horses to be uncoupled, and placing himself at the foot of the platform where the little Marietta Robusti sat, he selected ten of his joyous companions to sustain the challenges, who mounting ten of the horses, placed themselves five on each side of him. The young Moors then leading the other ten unmounted horses round the arena, waited until the ten champions from among the spectators should present themselves for the contest. They were not long in making their appearance, and the games commenced.

After running at the ring, and when many prizes had been lost and won, other competitors from the spectators and from the companions of the Lizard took the places of the vanquished. The games were prolonged for some time, the chief remaining always on his horse going and coming, and still more often conversing with his beloved Marietta, who vainly entreated him to take a part, as it was to him alone, she said, that she wished to award the grand prize. Valerio in these exercises possessed a superiority of which he disdained to make a parade; he liked better to protect and animate the pleasure of his companions. Besides he was thoughtful and sad; he could not conceive, after the devoted affection of which he had given proof by finishing the undertaking of his brother, that Francesco should carry his severity to such a point as not to come to the festival even as a spectator.

But Valerio aroused himself from his reverie, when the three Bianchini descended into the area, and desired to measure themselves with the most skilful members of the society. Dominic Bianchini, commonly called Rossetto or the Red, was a good horseman. He had lived in foreign countries for a long time, where the science of horsemanship is much more cultivated than in Venice. It was not all the companions of the Lizard who knew how to bear themselves in their stirrups, only those who had been educated in the country, or were strangers in the town, knew how to handle the bridle and keep their balance on their seat so much less peaceful than a Venitian gondola. Three of the most skilful presented themselves to do battle with the Bianchini, and were completely conquered, in the first round; three others succeeded and shared the same fate. The honour of the company was in jeopady. Valerio was mortified, for, until then, his cavaliers had had the advantage over all the young people of the city, and even over the young nobles, who had not disdained to measure themselves with them. But his heart was so heavy that he did not even trouble himself to pick up the glove, nor to lower the pride of the Bianchini. Vincent seeing his indifference, and attributing it to the fear of being overcome, cried to him in his coarse voice,

"Hola there, Monsignor Prince of the Lizards, are you changed into a tortoise, or have you no more champions to oppose to us?"

Valerio gave a sign, and Ceccato, with Marini, presented themselves.

"And you, Signor Valerio, or rather your Majesty of the Lizard," exclaimed in his turn Dominic the Red, "do you disdain to measure yourself with an antognist of so low a quality as myself?"

"In good time, if necessary," replied Valerio. "Let your brothers try first with my two friends, and if your side is beaten, I will give you your revenge."

The two Bianchini again carried off the victory, and Valerio resolving not to leave them the advantage, spurred his horse to the gallop. The trumpets gave forth their proudest and most joyous sounds, as with lightning speed he made the tour of the arena three times, neither raising his arm, nor regarding the goal, but suddenly, whilst apparently thinking of other things, and in a moment of abstraction, he carried off the five rings with a disdainful and nonchalant air. The Bianchini had as yet only carried off four; they were becoming fatigued, and as they had gained every round till then, this defeat need not have caused them much mortification. But Dominic the Red, who had taken no part in this last trial, and had been resting himself for some time, burnt with a desire to humiliate Valerio. He hated him with peculiar hatred, because Valerio had prevented his being received into the company of the Lizard, on account of his revolting ugliness. Vincent, his eldest brother, had been rejected because he had forfeited his honour and undergone an infamous punishment. Gian Antonio had been admitted to the trial, but he had scarcely drunk three measures of wine before he lost all command of himself, and insulted many respectable people. All three therefore found themselves excluded from the club for most mortifying reasons, and to avenge themselves, they had made Bozza believe that he was rejected beforehand, because he was illegitimate, and thus had prevented his even inserting himself upon the list.

Dominic thrust himself before Valerio, who was returning to his place intending to leave the lists open to another. "You promised me my revenge, Don Lizard," said he; "are you already withdrawing from the play?"—Valerio turned, and regarding Dominic with an air of contempt, re-entered the arena with him without any other reply.

"Begin, since you are the winner," said Dominic with an ironical air, "Honour to whom honour is due."

Valerio carried off four rings, but what did not happen to him once in a hundred times, occurred now, he missed the fifth ring, and it fell to the ground. He had been distracted by his father's figure, who had just placed himself in a neighbouring gallery. The old Zuccati seemed troubled, he was seeking Francesco, and the severe looks he directed at Valerio, seemed to say as the awful voice of other days to Cain, "Where is thy brother?"

The Bianchini uttered a cry of joy. They fancied themselves already revenged by Dominic, but his vainglorious hurry deceived him; he missed the fourth ring, and Valerio remained conqueror.

This victory would not have satisfied Valerio's self-love at any other time, but he wished so ardently to close the games, and to go in search of his brother, that he only drew his breath freely when he found himself authorized to go and receive the prize.

Already Marietta's little hands held the embroidered scarf, when just as he was putting his foot to the ground amidst the general applause, Bartolomeo Bozza clothed in black from head to foot, with an eagle's plume, appeared in the arena, as suddenly as though he had sprung from the earth; and demanded to sustain the side of the Bianchini.

"I have had enough, the games are finished," said Valerio impatiently.

"And how long," exclaimed Bozza in his sharp and bitter voice, "Has it been the custom for the chief of the course to recoil at the last moment, from the fear of losing an unfairly acquired prize? In fair play you owe Messer Dominic a revenge, for he was evidently disturbed in his last attempt. Besides, he is extremely fatigued, and you have no right to be so. If you are not as cowardly as your emblem the lizard, you ought to give me a chance."

"I will give you this chance," said Valerio, much provoked, "but this evening or to-morrow you shall give me one of a more serious nature, to answer for the manner in which you presume to speak to me. Now then, begin. I yield you precedence, and give you three points.

"I do not want one," said Bozza—"A horse here directly! What, that wretched hack!" cried he, turning towards the Moresco, who brought forward a fiery horse, "Have you not one less broken backed?"

So saying, he sprang with surprising agility upon the courser, without even putting his foot into the stirrup, and made him curvet and caracole with a courage and audacity which prejudiced every one in his favour, then darting forward like a thunderbolt:—

"I never play for less than ten rings," cried he in an arrogant tone.

"Ten rings let it be," cried Valerio, whose preoccupied manner began to shake the confidence of his partizans.

Bozza carried off the ten rings in a single round, and then abruptly checking his horse in the midst of the gallop in the intrepid and vigorous manner of the Arabs, he leaped to the ground, whilst the animal reared, threw his lance into the middle of the arena, and regarding his adversary with a countenance full of irony, placing himself with a nonchalant air at the feet of Marietta Robusti.

Valerio deeply piqued, felt his spirits revive; he had eleven rings to carry off to win the prize. This was not beyond his powers, but more than he was accustomed to do, for five was the number usually attempted, and Bozza must have had extreme practice to obtain such success. Nevertheless contempt and resentment gave new strength to the young man. He set off and carried nine rings well, but at the very moment of touching the tenth, he felt that he trembled, and gave his horse the spur, in order to have a pretext to make the round again.

"Well!" said a voice in the neighbouring gallery. It was the voice of old Zuccato, it seemed to say, "you are losing time, Valerio, your brother is in danger," at least Valerio's imagination was deeply struck; but he brought his horse round and achieved the tenth ring.

Bozza turned pale; there was but one more ring, and he was conquered, but it was the decisive moment, and Valerio was visibly moved. Nevertheless pride combatted this secret terror, and he would have infallibly conquered, had not Vincent Bianchini, seeing his inevitable success, and being near enough to be heard, said to him with a lowering look,

"Yes, play on, gain, rejoice thou creeping animal, not long will it be before thou crawlest under the Leads with thy brother!"

At the very moment that he pronounced these last words, Valerio touched the ring, he became pale as death, and the ring fell. Hisses were heard on all sides, and the companions and partizans of the Bianchini gave voice to their insolent and furious joy.

"My brother!" exclaimed Valerio, "my brother under the Leads. Where is the coward who said it; who has seen my brother, who can tell me where he is?"

But his cries were lost in the tumult: order was disturbed, Bozza received the prize, and was carried away in triumph by the school of the Bianchini, who were now joined by all the dissatisfied who had been refused admission into the company of the Lizard.

Many vulgar jests, many significant pantomimes were acted by the noisy crowd. The ladies alarmed, pressed against the barricades to let this bacchanal rout go by. The companions of the Lizard wished to draw their swords and pursue them, and the police and halberdiers had great difficulty in restraining them. The rest of the crowd went away, mourning for the handsome Valerio, for whom all, but especially the women, were deeply interested. The little Marietta wept and threw her crown in vexation under the horses' feet.

In the midst of this deafening confusion, Valerio, unconscious of his defeat, and tortured by anxiety for his brother, ran at hazard through the city, with a distracted countenance, asking news of his brother from all whom he met.

CHAPTER XIV.

"What are you dreaming of, master?" said Ceccato, joining Valerio in the midst of the crowd, and seizing him by the arm. "How can you allow yourself to be so troubled by a mere cowardly assertion? Do you not see that Bianchini invented that trick just to make you miss the ring? He deserves to be well punished; but if you abandon your companions, and sadden the *fete* by your absence, the Bianchini will, indeed, triumph. It is easy to see that they have done all this to revenge themselves for their expulsion. Come, master, come and re-conduct the little queen, and make the tour of the quays with the music; the company cannot promenade without its chief. At the vespers we shall all seek Messer Francesco."

"But where can he be?" said Valerio, clasping his hands. "Who knows what they may have devised to throw him into prison?"

"Into prison! impossible, master; for what reason? on what pretext? Do they throw a man into prison at the first word spoken?"

"Yet he is not here; some powerful reason must detain him. He knows that I cannot enjoy the *fete* without him; and although he does not love *fetes*, he owed me this mark of complaisance, this recompense for my labours. Our enemies must have drawn him into an ambush; perhaps assassinated him! Vincent Bianchini is capable of any thing."

"Master, your brain is turned; for the love of heaven come amongst us! See, our company is dispersing, and if we do not take our revenge at the regatta this evening, the Bianchini will make such a noise, that nothing will be talked of to-morrow but the failure of the company of the Lizard."

Valerio felt a little reassured by the thought that perhaps Francesco had gone to see his father, and had been detained by him. The oddity and severity of old Zuccato authorized this idea to a certain point, and the angry glance he had cast, made Valerio think he had come expressly to blame him. He endeavoured to find his father in the crowd, although sure of meeting those bitter jests, of which old Zuccato, notwithstanding his tenderness for his children, was so lavish. However, he could not find him; and surrounded by his discontented companions, he was forced, rather than see them disband themselves entirely, to march at their head to the shore of the canal of St. George, known at present as the quay of the Esclavons.

The animating sounds of the music, the proud and slightly sarcastic gaiety of the little Marietta, whom four companions carried in a sort palanquin decorated with flowers, streamers, and arabesques designed by Valerio, the admiration of the spectators on the Lagunes, and all the seamen of the port grouped on the shore and on the shipping, the noise and the motion, a little reanimated Valerio. He breathed again at the hope of meeting his brother during the service for which the first bells were ringing, and which would suspend the diversions, when the sheath of a dagger fell from the roof of the ducal palace at his feet. Struck by a sudden thought he seized it, and drew from it a billet written with a piece of fusanus wood which Francesco had luckily in his pocket.

"Companions passing in joy to the sound of trumpets, make known to Valerio Zuccato, that his brother is under the leads, and that he awaits his—" The billet contained no more. Hearing the music approach, and fearing it would pass, Francesco, who could see nothing, but recognized Valerio's favourite march played by the hautboys, did not wait to finish his thought, but threw his note through the slit at the top of the window in the wall, called with good reason in technical language, the *jour de souffrance.*

Valerio uttered a terrible cry, and Francesco, notwithstanding the noise of the instruments and of the crowd, heard his thundering voice exclaim:

"My brother under the Leads! Curses on those who have sent him there!"

Valerio stopped with a movement so energetic, that an army could not have carried him forward. All the company stopped simultaneously, the fatal news flew from rank to rank, and they dispersed immediately; some to follow Valerio, who darted like lightning through the arcades of the palace, others to seek the Bianchini, and to force from them the secret of their machinations.

Valerio, transported with rage and with grief, at first ran forward without well knowing whither; but obeying an instinctive feeling he entered the court of the Ducal Palace. At this instant the Doge was remounting the giant's staircase with the Duke of Anjou, the procurators, and part of the senate. Valerio pressed boldly through all these noble lords, making way by his own impetuosity, and threw himself at the feet of the Doge, whom he even detained by his ermine mantle.

"What do you want, my son?" said Mocenigo, turning kindly towards him. "Why is your handsome face so full of despair?—have you suffered any injustice?—can I repair it?"

"Highness," cried Valerio, pressing the skirt of the ducal robe to his lips, "Yes, I have suffered a great injustice, and my soul is weighed down by grief. My elder brother, Francesco Zuccato, the first mosaic worker in all Italy, the bravest champion, and most loyal citizen of the Republic, has been conducted to the Leads without your order, without your permission, and I come to demand justice."

"To the Leads! Francesco Zuccato!" cried the Doge. "Who can have inflicted so severe a punishment on so brave a young man, on so great an artist? and if he has committed a fault, which merits chastisement, how is it that I am not informed of it?—Who has given the order?—which of you gentlemen will account to me for it?"

No one replied, and Valerio continued.

"Highness," said he, "the Procurators entrusted with the repairs in the cathedral ought to know; Monsignor Melchior the cashier must know."

"I will find out, Valeiro," replied the Doge. "Console yourself, justice shall be done. Let us now pass on."

"Highness, strike me with your sword if my audacity offend you," said Valerio, without leaving hold of the Doge's mantle, "but listen to the complaint of the most faithful of your fellow citizens. Francesco Zuccato can have committed no fault. He is a man who has never had an evil thought. To send him to the Leads is to do him an injustice for which he can never be consoled, and with which the whole city will be acquainted in an hour, if you do not restore his liberty and permit him to show himself with his companions, to the public, who are already marvelling not to see him at their head. Yet more, Highness, listen to me. Francesco is frail of body as a reed of the Lagunes. If he passes a day more beneath the Leads, it is enough, he will never come out, and you will have lost the best artist and the best citizen of the Republic; and other misfortunes will arise, for I swear by the blood of Christ . . ."

"Silence, my son," said the Doge gravely; "utter no senseless menaces. I cannot restore a prisoner to liberty without the consent of the Senate, and the Senate will not do it without knowing for what fault he suffers this chastisement, for some heavy suspicion must attach to a man who is condemned to the Leads. I promise you justice; do not mis-doubt the father of the Republic, but render yourself worthy of his protection by wise and prudent conduct. All that I can now do to soften your anxiety and the solitude of your brother, is to give you permission to visit him, and to bestow your care upon him if his health require it."

"Thanks, Highness. Blessings on you for this permission," said Valeiro, bowing his head and dropping the Doge's mantle, who passed on. The Duke of Anjou stopped before Velerio and said to him with a smile: "Young man, take courage, I undertake to remind the Doge that he has promised you speedy justice, and if your brother resemble you, I doubt not that he is a brave cavalier, and a loyal subject. Know that notwithstanding your defeat, I regard you as the hero of the day, and that your appearance and great talents interest me so strongly in your favor that I wish to attach you to the Court of France when the noble Republic of Venice shall no longer have need of your services."

Speaking this, he took off his rich chain of gold, and passed it round Valerio's neck, begging him to keep it, in memory of the giver.

CHAPTER XV.

Two halberdiers conducted Valerio to his brother's prison.

"You also," cried Francesco, "have the traitors also conquered you, poor youth ? Of what use is it to be without ambition and vanity ? Sacred modesty ! have they not even respected thee !"

" I am not a prisoner by the will of the scoundrels," said Valerio, embracing his brother, " but by my own. I quit you no more. I come to share your straw couch, and your black bread. But tell me who sent you here, and on what pretext ?"

" I know not," replied Francesco, " but I am not astonished ; are we not in Venice ?"

Valerio tried to console his brother, and to persuade him that he must have been arrested from some misconception, and that he would be immediately set at liberty. But Francesco replied with profound melancholy :—

" It is too late, they have caused me all the harm they could, they have inflicted an insult nothing can efface. What imports it now, whether I pass a day or a year in this frightful prison? Do you believe that it is the heat, do you think it is the sufferings of the body I have felt during this interminable day ? No ! I have suffered all the tortures of the soul. I, ranked among rogues and imposters ! I, who after so many watchful nights, after such conscientious labors, so much zeal and devotion to my country's glory, ought to be carried in triumph, and crowned by my school, amidst the acclamations of a grateful people : behold me, in a dungeon, as Vincent Bianchini has been for assassination and coining ! Behold the fruit of my labors, behold the recompense of my courage ! Be a consciencious artist ; wear out in gnawing cares, and enfeebling studies, the remains of a suffering and precarious life ; renounce the allurements of love, the seductions of pleasure, the voluptuous repose of the nights of spring ; and the day when you hoped to have deserved a crown, you will be loaded with fetters, you will be covered with shame ! And this blind and fickle public, who so unwillingly salutes truth, has always arms for calumny ! Be sure Valerio, that even now, this people, who has seen me from birth grow and strengthen in the love of labor, in the hatred of injustice, and in respect for the laws, this very people who only judge of human motives by their failure or success, be sure they condemn me already : now that they have known for ten minutes that I am in in prison. It is sufficient that I am unfortunate for them to believe me guilty. Already my name is confounded with that of Vincent Bianchini ; we have both been arrested, our heads have both bent beneath the Leads. I may, perhaps, be restored to liberty, because I am innocent, but was not he also restored, he who was guilty ? Who knows, if like him, I shall not be banished? Does not Venice banish all whom she suspects, and does not she suspect every one who is denounced?"

Valerio felt that his brother's grief was but too well founded, and that in endeavouring to reconcile him to his situation, he only made him more sensible of its rigour and its dangers. Towards evening he wished to go out to seek for food and a mantle for his brother, but upon summoning the jailor through the wicket, the man told him, that he had received an order not to let him leave the prison, and even showed him a paper with the seal of the Inquisitors of State, ordering the arrest of the brothers Zuccati, without the slightest intimation of its cause. A cry of grief escaped Francesco when he heard this decree.

" Behold," said he, " the last blow. The ruffians! could not they rid themselves of me, without inflicting the torture of seeing my brother's sufferings?"

" Do not pity me," said Valerio, " perhaps they would not have allowed me to pass my days and nights with you, and now, thanks to them, I shall never quit you."

Many days and many nights passed away without the brothers Zuccati receiving any explanation as to their position, or any consolation in their grief or anxiety. The heat was overpowering, the plague raged in Venice, the atmosphere of the prison was infected. Francesco, lying upon a heap of broken and dusty straw, seemed almost to have lost cognizance of his sufferings; from time to time, he stretched out his arm to carry to his lips a few drops of brackish water from a pewter goblet. Weakened by continued sweats, he dried his sharpened features with morsels of linen, which Valerio kept for him with extreme care, and washed every day, setting aside for that purpose half of his own miserable supply of water. It was almost the only service he could render his unfortunate brother. He was in want of every thing. He had used all his rich habiliments to form, with some of the straw, a kind of pillow and screen, and had only a few rags left for his own clothing, where some remains of gold and embroidery might yet be seen. Valerio had in vain offered his pearls, his poinard, and his gold chain to the jailors, to induce them to procure for Francesco some relaxation of the frightful severity of the *carcere duro.* The officers of the inquisition were incorruptible.

Notwithstanding the impossibility of assisting his brother, Valerio constantly bent over him. More robust, and too much absorbed by Francesco's sufferings to feel his own, he was constantly occupied in turning him upon his miserable couch, fanning him with the large plume of his cap, touching his burning hands, and watching his fading looks. Francesco no longer complained, he had lost all hope. When he rallied for a moment from his sufferings, he endeavoured to smile upon his brother, to say something affectionate to him, and then sunk again into an alarming stupor.

One evening Valerio was seated as usual upon the heated tiles, with Francesco's languid head upon his knees. The unpitying sun went down upon a fiery sea, and tinged with a sinister light the walls, which, being painted red, seemed to absorb and preserve all the heat of a conflagration. The plague was every where extending its ravages. All the sounds so animated, so joyful, of magnificent Venice, had given way to the silence of death; only interrupted by the mournful sound of the bell for the dying, or the distant psalm of some pious monk, as he passed down the canal, conducting a bark full of corpses to the cemetery. A martin came and perched upon the narrow slit which yielded a rarefied and withering atmosphere to the cell of the Zuccati. This black swallow, with its blood-red breast, sharp and piercing voice, and proud and savage attitude, seemed to Valerio of evil augury. It appeared disquieted, and after calling in its peculiar manner to some companion, flew away, uttering a cry which the Venetians know well, and which they never hear without consternation. It is the cry with which these migratory birds assemble, when the time for their change of hemisphere has arrived. They assemble in numerous bands, the heavens are darkened by them, and the same day sees one and all disappear. Their departure is the signal for the appearance of a veritable scourge. The *Mozelins*, almost imperceptible insects, whose sharp and continual buzzing is irritating, even to fever, and whose sting is insupportable, fill the atmosphere, and no longer pursued in the higher regions by the chasing swallow, alight on the houses, infest them, and rob of all slumber those Venetians whom the appliances of luxury do not preserve from their attacks.

Under the Leads and at a season when the air, charged with pestilential exhalations, instilled its venom into every pore, the appearance of the Mozelins which was soon followed by that of the Scorpions, was like a death warrant to Francesco. Although burnt up with violent fever, he had as yet tasted at night a little repose, during those hours when the refreshing breeze reached even him, but this repose was now snatched from him. During the night, these gnats penetrate into every dwelling, especially where the warm breath of man attracts them. Valerio listened with anxiety. He heard a thousand sharp cries, and unquiet and hasty chirpings, calling, replying, now far, now near. The birds assembled, settled on the roofs as though in deliberation, and took wing uttering their piercing adieu, like a final malediction over the grieving city. Valerio placed himself under the window whence nothing but the sky was visible. He saw the black specks moving over the heavens at an immeasurable height, no more pursuing the extensive regular circles of their chase, but all flying in a straight line towards the east. The swallows were already on their way. Francesco had heard their parting cry. He had read in Valerio's countenance the horror of this discovery. When man is overwhelmed by suffering he knows not how to look forward to fresh misfortune, although imminent and inevitable; he has no longer the strength to add by imagination future evil to present ill. When the evil happens he is crushed as by an unexpected catastrophe. Death itself—that fatal, that unavoidable denouement of existence, takes nearly all men by surprise, as an injustice of heaven, as a caprice of destiny.

"After to-morrow," said Francesco to his brother in a smothered voice, "I shall sleep no more!"—This was pronouncing his own death-warrant. Valerio understood him, and let his head drop upon his breast, whilst bitter tears, which till then he had stoically repressed, flowed in torrents down his wasted cheeks.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Inquisition was a power so mysterious, so despotic, there was so much danger in endeavouring to penetrate its secrets, and the endeavour was so difficult, that three days after St. Mark, no one even spoke of the arrest of the Zuccati. The report of Francesco's imprisonment had quickly spread, and had died away like the wave which expires upon the desert and silent strand. The smallest rock would repulse, and therefore excite it, but an expanse of sand, for years levelled and wasted by storms, receives the wave without any impression, and there all strength dies away for want of exercise; such was Venice. The unquiet effervescence, the natural curiosity of her people, exhausted itself like the vain foam of the sea on the steps of the ducal palace, and the gloomy waters which bathe its vaults, bear away at all times a trace of blood, of which the unknown source is concealed in the profound abysses of these discreet caverns.

The Plague also had filled all hearts with consternation and discouragement. All labour was suspended, all the schools dispersed; Marini had been struck one of the first, and was struggling in a slow and painful convalescence. Ceccato had lost one of his children and was attending an almost dying wife.

The rage of the Bianchinis had been stifled for a time by the fear of death. Bozza had disappeared.

Old Sebastian Zuccato had gone into the country the very day of St. Mark, at the end of the games, in a fit of ill humour, at what he called the extravagance and false glory of his sons. He was entirely ignorant of their misfortunes, and was indignant that they came not as usual to soften his anger by their respectful attentions.

The Plague having a little abated its malignity, the old Zuccato feared he might have lost his sons during its continuance He went to Venice, intending to scold his sons, but full of anxiety, and even more angrily disposed towards them, because he found it impossible not to love them. It must not be imagined that the scene in the cathedral had reconciled Sebastian to mosaic work. He was still exasperated against this species of labour, and those who gave themselves up to it. If he had experienced against his will that influence which great achievements exercise over an artist's soul, if he had pressed his children to his bosom, and shed tears of sympathy, he had not yielded any of his prejudices as to the pre-eminence of certain branches of art; even had he so willed, he could not at the threshold of the grave, have given up the obstinate opinions of his whole life. His only consolation was the hope of seeing Francesco one day renounce his vile trade, and return to the easel.

Intending to renew his exhortations to this effect, he went to the Cathedral expecting to find him still occupied with some other cupola, but he found it hung with black, and mournful sounds echoing through the gloomy isles. The tapers, struggling in the last faint beams of day, threw a pale red light more fearful than utter darkness. The last honours were being paid to two senators who had died of the plague. Their biers were in the portico, the service was being hurried through, and it was easy to see that the priests fulfilled their holy office with fear and trembling. The old Zuccato trembled from head to foot when he saw these two coffins, and was only reassured by hearing the names of the deceased magistrates. He left the Cathedral, and hurried to Valerio's workshop, at San Filippo. But there he was told that neither Valerio nor Francesco had appeared after the St. Mark, and he then sought them without success in all their accustomed haunts. At last, overcome by anxiety, he discovered the unhappy Ceccato, and from his gloomy conjectures, he imagined his sons must have perished under the Leads, either of grief or pestilence. He stood for some moments absorbed, immovable, pale as a shroud. At last he seemed to decide, and without saying a word to Ceccato or his afflicted family, he went straight to the Procurator Cashier. He was far from accusing him of the unjust arrest of his sons. Naturally submissive, he would have thought himself wanting in respect and affection for the laws, did he suspect a magistrate of error or prejudice. Displeased himself with his children, and quite ready to charge them with idleness or insolence, according to the decision of the Procurator, he wished at any price to know what had become of them. He therefore humbly greeted the Procurator, the corpulent Cashier, who doubtless to preserve himself from the Plague, was even more wrapped up in self than ever. He found him surrounded with smelling bottles and aromatics of all kinds, intended to purify the air he breathed. However, the ceremonious salutation of Sebastian, seemed to render him a little more tractable than usual.

"Well, well," said he, making a sign to him to keep at a distance, and holding to his nose a large handkerchief saturated with essence of juniper, "that's enough, good man. Don't come too near, and keep your breath in. By the horn, in this accursed time, one knows not to whom one may be speaking! Are you sure you are not ill? Now make haste, what is it you want?"

"Your highness," replied the old man, secretly a little mortified by this cavalier reception, "sees before you the syndic of the painters, Messer Sebastian Zuccato, your humble servant, father of——"

"Ah! that's true," replied Melchior, without moving, and merely making a movement, as if to raise his languid hand to the black silk cap which covered his large flat head. "I did not recollect you, Messer Zuccato. You are an honest man, but you have two violent scoundrels for your sons!"

"Excellence, the term is rather severe, but I do not deny that my sons are wild fellows, dissipated, and obstinate in their opinions, and devoted to a vile and disgraceful trade. I know they are in disgrace both with the other magistrates and yourself. I am certain, therefore, they must have committed some great fault, since your goodness to them has been changed into severity, and I do not come to justify them, but to entreat that your resentment may abate, and that your charity may take into consideration the impurity of the air, the intense heat of the season, and the feeble health of my eldest son, whom the regimen of the prison must have already so seriously affected, that he will remember this punishment and expose himself to it no more."

"Your son is, indeed, ill, they tell me," replied the Procurator. "But who is not in this melancholy time? I myself am really suffering, and without the extreme care of my doctor, I should have perished I have no doubt;—but one must take precautions, many precautions. By the Ducal Cap! I advise you to take precautions."

"Does your Excellency say that my son Francesco is ill?" said Sebastian alarmed.

"Oh! don't trouble yourself about that; one is not more ill in prison than elsewhere. We know by exact calculations, that on an average, no more prisoners die under the Leads than in the other prisons of the republic."

"Under the Leads, your Excellency!" cried the old man, "did you say under the Leads? Is it possible my sons are under the Leads?"

"By the Ducal Cap there they are, and they richly deserve it for their roguery and extortion."

"In Christ's name, Monsignor, you only wish to frighten me," said Zuccato in a firm voice, stepping back, "my children cannot be under the Leads."

"They are there, I tell you," replied the Procurator, "and I can't take them out till their trial is over. As soon as the Plague allows people to occupy themselves with their business, it will be looked after, but, by the Ducal Cap, I fear their fate will be yet worse, for they are surely guilty, and there is perpetual banishment for the defrauders of the public revenue."

"By the devil's body Messer," cried the old man, approaching the Procurator, "those who say so, lie in their throats, and those who have put my sons under the Leads, shall repent of it whilst I have strength to move a finger!"

"Keep off!" cried the Procurator, in his turn rising with alacrity, and moving his arm chair backwards, "do not bring your breath so near my face. If you have the pestilence, keep it, and go to the devil with your rascally sons. I tell you they shall be hung if you aggravate the affair by making a noise about it. All the Zuccati are downright scoundrels, on my word: you poison the atmosphere, Messer; go out!"

Whilst speaking thus, Melchior kept moving further back, and old Zuccato, immovable in his place, kept regarding him with looks which actually froze him with fear.

"If I had the plague," said he at last, with a gloomy air, "I should like to press in my arms all those who call the Zuccati defrauders. I hope that such an idea has occurred to no one, and that the magistrate to whom I have the honor of speaking, is at this time under the influence of fever or delirium. Yes, yes, Monsignor, it is the pestilence which speaks in you, when you say that the Zuccati have misapplied the public money. Know that the Zuccati are of a noble race, and that the blood flowing in their veins is purer than that of many ducal families. Know that Francesco and Valerio are men who may be tortured, but not dishonoured. Your Signiory will do well to summon your physician, for a mortal poison is indeed circulating in your blood!"

As he finished these terrible words, Sebastian hastily left the Procurator, and hurried to the Ducal Palace.

Melchoir rang his bell in agony, sent for his doctor, had himself bled, rubbed, and dosed, all night long, verily believing the old man had given him the Plague by sorcery. He swooned away several times, and was nearly dead with fright.

CHAPTER XVII.

Sebastian hastened to throw himself at the feet of the Doge, and demanded justice from him with all the eloquence of paternal love, and outraged honour. Mocenigo listened to him with kindness, and gave him marks of the highest esteem. He was afflicted at the long sufferings his sons had undergone, and took upon himself to transfer them to a less frightful prison. He even permitted the old man to see them every day, and lavish all the care his affection suggested; but he could not conceal from him that very heavy charges hung over them, and that their trial would be long and serious.

However, thanks to the earnest intercession of old Zuccato, to the influence of Titian, Tintoretto, and many other great masters, all friends to the Zuccati, thanks also to the benevolent protection of the Doge, the Council of Ten, whose functions had been suspended by the Plague for some months, resumed their sittings, and the first affair which occupied their austere tribunal, was the trial of the Zuccati, accused of:—

1st.—Having misapplied their salary by producing works without solidity, for example, working out of season, (*fuor distogione*,) that is to say in times of frost, when the mastic will not adhere, that they might make up for time lost, in fine weather, in promenades, dissipation, and debauchery of every description.

2nd.—Having produced figures which were both ill drawn and strangely coloured, through persisting in working at night, in order still to make up for former idleness—(*ingordigia.*)

3rd.—Having produced this miserable work from entire ignorance of their trade, an ignorance which rendered Valerio Zuccato incapable of doing anything else but frivolous ornaments for the toilette of women and young people, (*cuffie, frastagli, vesture, etc.*) which puerile labours occupied him incessantly, and even became a lucrative profession at San Filippo, whilst the Republic paid dearly for work which he did not and could not do.

4th.—Having replaced by a shameful cheat, in many places, the pieces of enamel and stone, (*i pezzi,*) by wood and pasteboard merely painted, in order to display niceties of which mosaic work was not really susceptible—thereby attaining great credit as artists during their lives, but leaving behind them productions which would not survive them.

The articles of this strange trial may yet be found in the archives of the ducal palace, and Signor Quadri has extracted a faithful copy which may be read in an article entitled, "Of the Mosaic Workers," (*Dei Musaici,*) at the end of his excellent work upon Painting in Venice.

The accusers were the Procurator-Cashier Melchior, Bartolomeo Bozza, the three Bianchini, Jean Visentin and several others of their school—besides Claude de Corregio, organist of St. Mark, who detested the noise of the workmen, and who would just as soon have spoken in favour of the Zuccati, against the Bianchini, in the hope that tired of these quarrels and dilapidations, the government would give up these expensive restorations, whose principal inconvenience in the organists eyes, was interrupting by its continual noise the school for chanting, which he had established in the organ gallery.

The witnesses in favour of the Zuccati were Titian and his son Orazio, Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, Marini Ceccato, and the good priest Alberto Zio. All appeared before the council and testified to the great talent, the superior workmanship, the good conduct, industry, and exact probity of the Zuccati and their school.

In their turn, the brothers Zuccati were brought before the judges; Valerio supported in his arms his idolized brother, who was slowly recovering from his long and cruel illness; feeble, broken down, and apparently scarcely caring for the issue of the trial, which he had not strength to support. Valerio was pale and worn. He had been furnished with clothing, but his long beard and neglected hair, his unsteady walk and convulsive trembling, spoke of his sufferings and his grief.

Indifferent to his own sorrow, but indignant at the injustice done to his brother, he at last looked upon the serious side of life. Anger and revenge sparkled in his countenance, and dark, fiery flames shot from his eyes, hollowed by hunger, fatigue, and anxiety.

On passing Bartolomeo Bozza to take his seat on the bench of the accused, he raised his arms, loaded with fetters, as though he would have crushed him, and his countenance glowing with fury seemed as though he would fain level him to the earth. The officers drew him forward, and he sat down, holding Francesco's hand in his own cold trembling grasp.

"Francesco Zuccato," said the judge, "you are accused of robbery and fraud towards the Republic. What have you to reply to the charge?"

"I reply," said Francesco, "that I might as well be accused of murder and parricide, if it pleased the fancy of my persecutors."

"And I," cried Valerio, rising impetuously, "I reply that we lay under the weight of an infamous accusation, and that we have languished for three months under the Leads, whence my brother has come out in a dying state, because the Bianchini hate us, and that Bozza our pupil is a scoundrel, but above all because the Procurator Monsignor Melchior has made a fault in his Latin which we allowed ourselves to correct. It is the first time two citizens were ever sent to the Leads for refusing to commit a barbarism!"

The violence of the younger Zuccati was not calculated to conciliate the magistrates. Old Sebastian seeing the bad effect of his harangue, rose and said:

"Be quiet my son, you are speaking both insolently and foolishly. It is not thus that an honest citizen ought to defend himself before the fathers of his country. Monsignors, excuse his ravings. These young men are affected by the fever.—Examine their cause with your impartial justice; if they are culpable, punish them without pity; their father will be the first to praise this act of justice and bless the laws whose severity represses fraud. Were it necessary to shed their blood myself, I would do it, venerable fathers, rather than see the august power of the Republic fall into discredit. But if they are innocent, of which I feel the utmost certainty, render them prompt and generous mercy, for behold my eldest scarcely breathes the breath of life, and the younger you see yourselves is under the influence of delirium." Speaking thus the old man fell upon his knees, and tears streamed down his long white beard.

"Sebastian Zuccato," said the judge, "your probity and loyalty are well known to the Republic; you speak as a good father, and a good citizen, but if you have nothing else to say for your sons, you must now retire."

At a sign from the magistrate, the "Familiar," who had introduced Sebastian, led him away. The old man, as he retired, threw a look of despair upon his sons; then turning for the last time towards the judges, joined his hands, and raised his eyes towards heaven with so agonized an expression that it might have touched the marble pillars of the hall, but the Council of Ten seemed even colder and more inflexible.

After the three Bianchini had supported their accusation by oath, Bozza was summoned to give his evidence, and putting his hand upon the crucifix held out to him, he said:

"I swear by Christ that I have passed three months under the Leads, because I would not bear false witness." A shudder of surprise passed through the assembly, Melchior frowned, Bianchini the Red ground his teeth, and the young Valerio, hastily rising cried out, "Is it possible, my unfortunate pupil, that I may yet pity and esteem you? Ah! that thought softens all my woes."

"Be quiet, Valerio Zuccato," said the judge, "and let the witness speak."

Bartolomeo looked as weak and ill as the Zuccati. He had also suffered the slow torture of captivity. He declared that some days before St. Mark, Vincent Bianchini had conducted him to the scaffolding of the Zuccati, to show him, and make him examine many parts of the work, where pasteboard was evidently used instead of enamel, and that he had then taken him before the Procurator-Cashier, before whom, in the indignation and sincerity of his heart, he had deposed to the fact. Since that time, convinced of the bad faith of the Zuccati, he had not wished to be an accomplice in work which must meet with condemnation, and he had therefore laboured in the school of the Bianchini. But on St. Mark's Eve, Vincent, having again taken him before the Procurator, wished him to swear that he had been an eye witness of the fact, which he refused; because, although he had seen the proofs, yet he had not seen the fraud actually committed. "Had I seen it," said he, "I should not have waited for the warning of the Bianchini to quit the studio of the Zuccati, but I had never seen anything of the kind. Never had the slightest fact occurred in the conduct of my masters to render the truth of the discovery we had just made even probable. It was therefore impossible to swear by Christ that I had seen them employ pasteboard and the paint-brush. When Vincent Bianchini saw that I did not accede to his designs, he became angry, and accused me of collision with the Zuccati; Monsignor Melchior menaced me so strongly, that in my irritation I warned him to beware of the Bianchini. That very evening I was arrested, and conducted to the Leads. Since then I have imagined that my masters were innocent, and that a man capable of asking me to take a false oath, was also capable of having during the night, unknown both to the Zuccati and to every one else, destroyed a part of the Mosaic, and substituted pasteboard or wood for stone, in order to ruin them. I must also declare that the substitution is made with so much art, that unless the surface is scratched, it would be impossible to perceive it."

Bozza delivered his testimony with a firm voice and a Bolognese pronunciation, very slowly and very distinctly. Pressed to explain himself as to the continual diversions to which Valerio yielded, he owned that the young master was often admonished by his elder brother for indolence and dissipation, and that he did make up for lost time by working at night, which might give colour to the reproach of having produced (*fuor di stagione*) work without solidity. He also stated that Valerio did not understand the business so well as his brother, and made many ornaments and decorations on his own account. In a word it was easy to see that his evidence was not influenced by friendship to the Zuccati, and that he would not have been displeased to have injured them by speaking the truth, but that he had a horror of the deceit into which he had nearly been drawn, and that he would never forgive the Bianchini for having caused him to be confined under the Leads.

The council closed the sitting of the day by naming a committee of painters, charged with the examination, under the eyes of the Procurators, of the productions of the two rival schools. The committee was composed of Titian, Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, Jacopo Pistoza, and Andrea Schiavone, who from that time was surnamed Medola, from the pains he took to examine mosaic even to its very marrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The next day these illustrious masters, accompanied by their workpeople, the Procurators, and the Familiars of the Holy Office, went to St. Mark, and proceeded to the examination of the Mosaic work. At the Bianchini's request they commenced by their genealogical Tree of the Virgin, an immense undertaking, which had been executed in very little time. Vincent added to his vices an unbearable vanity. Greedy of praise, he followed Titian step by step, waiting for the explosion of his admiration. Beside him walked Dominic the Red, his eye sparkling with all the assurance of ignorant stupidity. Nevertheless Titian did not explain his opinion. Always *spirituel* and courteous, he managed to say things which marked attention and interest, without compromising in any manner his judgment as a connoisseur. His polished attitudes, and gracious smiles, formed a contrast with the darkened brow and austere countenance of Tintoretto. Although less intimate perhaps with the Zuccati, Robusti was far more indignant at the conduct of their rivals than Titian was. In the mind of Titian, who often nourished profound hatred and impracticable antipathies, the conduct of the Bianchini found, if not an excuse, at least a more indulgent consideration, from the jealousies of trade and artistic ambition. Perhaps also Tintoretto, recollecting the persecution he had himself suffered from Titian, wished to convey him, by indirect allusion, a legitimate reproach, by displaying his horror and contempt for such proceedings. He left the chapel of St. Isidore without unclosing his lips, and without once turning his eyes upon those who accompanied him.

But when beneath the great doom, he had under observation the work of the Zuccati, he burst forth into eloquent admiration; his fine, though severe features lighted up with enthusiasm, and he displayed all the perfections of the work with generous warmth. Titian, who was an intimate friend of old Sebastian, and who had given many excellent lessons to the young Zuccati, added to these praises, without however depreciating the productions of the Bianchini, in which respect he displayed great prudence. But the Procurator-Cashier, vexed at the success of the Zuccati, commenced with :—

"Messrs, I would beg you to observe that we have not come here to see productions in painting, but productions in mosaic. It matters very little to the state whether the Virgin's hand be modelled according to the rules of your art; it matters very little whether the calf of St. Isidore's leg be placed a little too high or too low. All that is very well to talk about . . . . "

"How say you! by Christ," cried Titian, who on hearing such blasphemy, quite forgot his prudent courtesy, "it matters little to the state whether the mosaists understand design, or whether mosaic be an elegant and faithful representation of the painters' works? It is the first time I ever heard of such a doctrine, Monsignor, and it needs all the respect your judgment inspires to convince me of the truth of such a theory."

Nothing fixed the erroneous convictions of the Procurator like contradiction.

"And I, Messer Titian," cried he warmly, "will sustain that all that is nothing but puerile minutiæ and detail. These are nothing but the quarrels of a school, and the discussions of a workshop, and the gravity of the magistracy ought not to be compromised therein. Entrusted by the Republic with watching over its interests and carrying economy into its public expenditure, the Procurator will never allow the workmen of St. Mark to fail in their engagements in order to enjoy the vain pleasure of amusing those who may be amateurs of painting."

"I did not think," said Francesco, casting a mournful glance at his productions, "I could fail in my engagements, by correcting as far as possible the design of my figures, and conscientiously conforming to all the rules of my art."

"I know all the rules of your art as well as you, Messer," cried the Procurator, crimson with anger; "you will never make me believe that a mosaist need be a painter. The Republic pays you to be a faithful and servile copier of the painters' sketches, and provided you fasten your stones properly, and with nicety, to the wall, provided you know how to employ good materials, and to produce the effects of which they are capable, it matters very little whether you know the rules of design and the laws of painting. By the Ducal Cap, if you were great artists, the Republic might be yet more economical. It would then have no need to pay Messer Vecelli and Messer Robusti to design your cartoons. You might be left free to compose, arrange, and trace your subjects. Unfortunately, we have not yet sufficient confidence in your knowleege of painting to trust so entirely to it."

"And yet, Monsignor," said Titian, who had recovered his self-command, and knew how to give a gracious expression to the smile of contempt playing on his lips, "I must object to your Excellence, that in order to copy a design faithfully, one must be a good designer; if not, the cartoons of Raphael might be confided to the first comer, and a good model to copy from would suffice to produce a great artist. It is not exactly so, and your Signiory will permit me to observe it, with all the respect I owe to your opinions; but it is one thing to govern mankind by sublime wisdom, and quite another to amuse them by frivolous talents. We should be much embarrassed, we poor artizans, if we were obliged, like your Signiory, to hold the reins of State with a firm, yet generous grasp, but, ..."

"But you contend, flatterer," said the mollified Procurator, "that as to painting and mosaic, you know more than we do. But at least you will not deny that solidity is an indispensable quality in this kind of work, and if, instead of employing stone, crystal, marble, or enamel, pasteboard, wood oil, or varnish is made use of, then you will confess that the funds of the Republic have not reached their true destination."

At this Titian felt a little embarrassed, for he did not know how far this assertion of the Bianchini might be well-founded, and he feared to compromise the Zuccati by an imprudent admission."

"I should at least deny," said he, after a moment's hesitation, that such a substitution of materials would constitute fraud, since it has been proved, I believe, that the paint-brush may be used, in certain parts, with as much solidity as enamel."

"Well that is what we shall see, Messer Valerio,' said the Procurator, "for we would not wish to suspect your integrity in the affair. But sand and sponges here, and by the Ducal Cap, let all these panels be well rubbed."

Francesco's almost expiring eyes brightened, and turned with a contemptuous hatred towards the inscription where the word *saxis* replaced the barbarism *saxibus*. It was evident that if he was to be condemned for the alteration of a letter, he should at least be consoled by the public exposure of the ignorant Procurator's blunder. Melchior understood his thought, and directed the proof to be turned to some other part of the dome.

The mosaic of the Zuccati, rubbed and washed at every point, stood the trial perfectly, and no part was discovered which fell or even threatened to fall. The Procutor began to fear that the blind hatred of the Bianchini, and his own prejudices, had involved him in an affair which would not redound to his honour, but Vincent Bianchini, approaching the two arch angels, of whom one was the portrait of Valerio, and the other of Francesco Zuccati, said with assurance, "It is certain that wood and pasteboard may resist sand and a damp sponge; but it is not so certain that they can resist the action of time, and behold the proof,"—so saying he drew his dagger, and thrusting it into the naked breast of the archangel which represented Francesco Zuccato, just at the heart, he detached a morsel of something the colour of flesh, which he cut in two pieces with the blade, and presented to the Procurators. The fragment passed from hand to hand, Titian himself was obliged to agree that it was nothing but a morsel of wood.

CHAPTER XIX.

Francesco and Valerio were reconducted to prison, and a week afterwards they again appeared before the Council of Ten. The report, corrected by the Commission of Painters, was read to them. They had abstained from signalizing the inferiority of the productions of the Bianchini, as they were aware that by depreciating their knowledge of art, they would irritate yet more the Procurator-Cashier, and as the situation of the Zuccati was already unfavorable, prudence required that they should not further inflame the hatred of their persecutors. But the Commissioners had been lavish of praise to the cupola done by the Zuccati, and had vouched for the solidity of the work, with the exception of two comparatively unimportant figures, where wood had been employed for stone. Titian had even affirmed that he esteemed this painted mosaic capable of resisting the action of time five hundred years and more. And his prediction has been verified, for these portions are yet in existence, and are as solid and as beautiful, as any other parts of the mosaic. As for the business knowledge of the younger Zuccato, taxed with incapacity or ignorance by his accusers, he was victoriously defended by the record, and declared to be at least as skilful as his brother.

After this declaration, the whole accusation resolved itself into one charge, that of substituting unusual materials in the execution of the two archangels.

Francesco, when questioned upon what he had to say in his defence, replied, that having been long convinced of the advantage of this substitution for certain details, and anxious to test its solidity, he had tried it in two unimportant figures,and that he had always intended to repair them at his own expense, if their duration did not answer expectation, or the Republic disapproved of the innovation.

The Council did not seem disposed to admit this excuse. And tormented by questions and menaces, Valerio could no longer control himself. "Well," cried he, "if you are determined to know, behold the secret, which my brother wished to keep. By revealing it to you, I know full well, that I expose myself not only to the envy and hatred which now weighs upon us, but to that of all our future rivals. I know that ignorant workmen, unworthy artisans, will be irritated to see in us conscientious artists; I know that they will pretend that mosaic is but a simple art of masonry, and they will treat him as a bad companion and ambitious rival, who raises it to an art, and carries to it a gleam of enthusiasm or the light of intelligence. I protest against such blasphemy; I maintain that a true mosaist ought to be a painter, and I declare that my brother Francesco, the pupil of his father, and of Messer Titian, is a great painter, and I prove it by declaring that the two figures of archangels, which have obtained the praises of the illustrious Commission named by the Council, were imagined, composed, designed, and coloured, by my brother, whose apprentice and workman I have been, by faithfully copying his cartoons. We have perhaps committed a great crime by allowing ourselves to consecrate to the Republic our best production, by offering it gratis and in secret, with the modesty becoming young people, and with the prudence belonging to men, devoted to other gods than money or favor. By accusing us of a fraud, we have been forced to renounce this prudence, this modesty. We demand, in consequence, that it be proved, whether we have tried this innovation any were except in a composition which had not even been ordered from us, and which we are ready to efface from the Cathedral, if the Government declare it unworthy to stand by the side of the productions of the Bianchini."

The plans of the different compositions designed by the painters and confided to the Mosaists were consulted, but the two figures of archangels were not found. The Procurator Melchior pressed each of the painters to express his opinion upon the merit of the figures and his share in its production. As in this respect they had been invested with full and entire powers by the state, a single sketch traced by one of them would have sufficed to prove the Zuccati, who were bound to execute their instructions literally, guilty of faithlessness, disobedience, and fraud, in employing a process of their own choice, and materials not approved by the Commission of Procurators. The painters on oath declared that they had never even had the idea of these figures, and as to their merit, they affirmed that they themselves could not create anything more correct and more noble. Titian was twice interrogated. His friendship for the Zuccati was well known, and also his *finesse*, and skill in evading any questions to which he did not wish to reply. When summoned to say if he were the author of these figures, he replied with grace, "I would willingly be so, but on my concience, I have not even seen the design, and I did not even suspect their existence before the examination which I was ordered to make, as a member of the Commission."

The Bianchini still declared that the Zuccati were not capable of themselves composing such excellent productions. Notwithstanding the painter's declaration, another enquiry was instituted, when Bozza was again summoned, as an old pupil of the Zuccati, to say if he had ever seen any painter put his hand to these figures. He deposed hat he had once seen Messer Orazio Vicelli, Titian's son come by night to the workshop of the Zuccati whilst they were yet labouring at them. Orazio was heard, and attested on oath, that he had never even seen them, and that his visit at night to the workshop at San Filippo, had no other object than to order from Valerio a bracelet of mosaic work to give to a lady. Thus there remained no proof against the Zuccati—they were acquitted, but charged with replacing at their own expense, by fragments of stone or enamel, the pieces of coloured wood employed in various parts of their figures. This part of the decree was nothing but a form in order not to encourage innovations. Its execution was not even enforced, for the coloured fragments of wood still exist. The Procurator's barbarism has been reinstated just as it issued from the learned brain of the Magistrate, and below the two archangels may be read the following touching inscription alluding to the persecutions suffered by the Zuccati.

UBI DILIGENTER
INSPEXERIS ARTEMQ AC LABO-
REM FRANSCISCI ET VALERII
ZVCATI VENETORVM FRATRVM
AGNOVERIS TVM DEMVM IVDI-
CATO.

CHAPTER XX.

Notwithstanding the happy issue of the trial, much was o be done before the Zuccati's fortune could assume a happy aspect. Francesco was recovering his health but slowly. No new public work was entrusted to the mosaists. It was even proposed to stop entirely, and preserve the Byzantine mosaics; for the manners of the day were becoming austere, and whilst sumptuary laws were ordering into mourning every mantle and every gondola, even those, the least inclined to gravity by nature, affected, in imitation, to clothe themselves in the Roman toga, and only to wear iron and silver ornaments. Economy was in every one's mouth, the pestilence had put a stop to trade, and as men quickly pass from one extreme to the other, sordid reductions, and puerile reforms were now the order of the day. The artists suffered deeply from this period of financial panic. The Procurator-Cashier was not a solitary instance of folly, but the representative of many narrow minds.

Francesco had fallen into a state of profound discouragement. A most enthusiastic artist, he had desired, he had hoped for glory. He had served it, as one serves a noble mistress, by noble sacrifices, by an ardent and exclusive worship.

For his only recompense he had seen himself exposed to a frightful prison, imminent death, and a disgraceful trial. In addition to this, the success of his *chef d'œuvres* was disputed. Men do not see with impunity misfortune fall upon an elevated character. In their mediocrity they feel bewildered, and seek by all means to legitimize and justify the evils by which he is overwhelmed.

It was quite sufficient that a piece of wood had been found in one of the productions of the Zuccati, for the public to think that all their mosaic was executed in wood. The citizens even went so far as to say it was made of paper, and convinced of its want of solidity, they would have imagined themselves wanting in patriotism had they even raised their heads to examine the beauty of the figures. The young artist was thus wounded in his inmost soul, and suffered the more because he carefully concealed his feelings, and despised the public too much to allow it the satisfaction of seeing him overcome. Retired in his little chamber at San Filippo, he passed his days at the window, given up to sad thoughts, and had no other distraction from his grief than watching the long climbing plants in his little court blown about by the wind. This calm spectacle filled him with delight, after the confinement of the Leads, where the want of air had been slowly undermining his life.

In the days of his good fortune, and expensive amusements, Valerio had contracted some considerable debts; his creditors tormented him. Francesco discovered it, and devoted all his savings to their payment. Valerio did not know it till some time after; he was mournful enough, without remorse adding its inquietude to that which the failing health of his idolized brother caused him. The idea of losing him overcame all his strength of mind, and he felt that, notwithstanding his natural disposition to think lightly of life's evils, he could never be consoled for his loss. Incapable of melancholy, too energetic for resignation, or for despair, he gave way often to fits of violent indignation, to which succeeded the most brilliant dreams of glory and happiness, although no one less than himself had need of glory to be happy. Old Sebastain conjured them in vain to take up the brush, and renounce the low profession of mosaist; but Francesco had suffered too rude a shock to give himself up to new hopes. To try a new career at thirty required too much resolution for a frame so weak, and a spirit so deeply wounded. To his own sorrows were added those of his friends; his disgrace had lost Ceccato his privilege of mastership; he and Marini were both languishing in destitution; and in vain did Francesco solicit for payment for his year's work.

The finances, like all other parts of the administration, were in the greatest disorder. All his entreaties were useless; he was put off from day to day, from week to week. The secret hatred of the Procurator-Cashier was the principal cause of this delay of payment. It was his dull vengeance for the Zuccati's irony, which, in his opinion, had not been sufficiently punished by the Council.

The Zuccati were resolved to share their last morsel of bread with their faithful apprentices. They supported Marini, Ceccato, his young wife now recovering her health, and her last child. Valerio still earned a little money from the Greeks at Venice, by selling jewels to them, but this resource was not sufficient for so numerous a family, when the last of Francesco's savings had vanished. Valerio bitterly reproached himself for having saved nothing, and felt too late that extravagance is a vice. "Yes," said he, sighing, "the man who spends in vain pleasures and empty parade, the price of his labour, deserves no friends, for he deprives himself of the power of assisting them in the day of their distress."

But it is wonderful to see with what indefatigable zeal, by what ingenious devotion he repaired his past faults. He divided his own small lodgings into three parts, the workshop, the eating room, and Francesco's chamber. He himself slept upon a mat in any corner, usually upon the terrace of his dwelling. In the day time, he worked assiduously, and employed his apprentices on fresh mosaic work, hoping that a time might come when the monuments of art would no longer be classed as objects of mere luxury or fantasy. He took upon himself all the household cares, and if he allowed Ceccato's wife to prepare the dinner, he would never suffer her to fatigue herself with going to purchase it. He went himself to the fish market, to the vegetable market, to the *frittole*, and he might often be seen, with the sweat on his brow, traversing the bye-streets with a basket under his mantle. If he met any of the young patricians, who had once shared his extravagance and amusements, he carefully avoided them, and obstinately concealed his penury, lest they should send him succour, the mere offer of which would have humiliated him. He affected to have lost nothing of his gaity, but the forced laugh upon his faded lips, the fiery glances from eyes now bright only with fever and excitement, could only deceive a common friendship or pre-occupied minds. One day as Valerio was returning through a small dark and silent court which served as a passage, he saw endeavouring to sustain himself against the damp wall, a man who seemed ready to sink through weakness. He approached, and supported him in his arms. But what was his surprise when he recognized in this man, covered with rags, and worn down by hunger, and whom he had taken for a beggar, his old pupil, Bartolomeo Bozza.

"Then they are in Venice," exclaimed he, "artists yet more unhappy than myself."

He made him swallow a little of the Istrian wine, of which he had a bottle in his basket, and then gave him some figs, which the unfortunate being seized with a voracity which did not allow him even to reject the skin. When his hunger was a little appeased, he recognized the charitable man who had assisted him. A flood of tears fell from his eyes, but Valerio could never understand whether it was shame, remorse, or gratitude, which made them flow, for Bozza uttered not a word, and turned as though to go away. But the kind-hearted Valerio stopped him.

"Where would you go, unhappy one?" said he; "do not you feel that you have not recovered your strength, and that you will sink again in a few moments. I am poor also, and cannot offer you money; but come with me, and your old friends will receive you with open arms, and whilst there is a measure of rice at San Filippo, you shall share it with us."

He drew him on as he spoke, and Bozza yielded mechanically, without showing either joy or surprise.

CHAPTER XXI.

Francesco could not repress a feeling of repugnance when Bozza made his appearance; he knew that this young man, although incapable of a base or dishonest action, had no benevolence, no affection, no generous sentiment, in his heart. All suggestions of tenderness, or sympathy were overpowered in him by his unconquerable pride and insatiable ambition. Nevertheless, when he heard from Valerio the state in which he had found Bozza, he ran to seek some of his own clothes, and one of his best robes, and offered them to him, whilst Valerio prepared for him a substantial meal. From that moment Bozza formed part of the indigent family, which still through order, economy, and labour, lived honourably at San Filippo. Valerio did not regret his own hard work, and every evening when he saw all his old scholars meet at his humble repast, his soul opened once more to joy, and he gave himself up to gaiety. But when Francesco anxiously met Bozza's glance, it never expressed anything but indifference or disdain. Bozza could not even comprehend the heroic devotion of the Zuccati. He understood their nobleness of soul so little, that he attributed it to motives of personal advantage, to a design of founding a new school, and of experimenting on the work of their apprentices, and binding them by such services that they could not engage themselves to a rival studio. Thus the same line of conduct which his companions, and with justice, thought sublime, to him seemed simply a skilful calculation.

But their destitution became yet more pressing. The Zuccati had resolved to bear the severest privations rather than have recourse to the illustrious masters whose friendship they possessed. Their father's fortune was very moderate; and his pride had always made him refuse any assistance from his sons, placed, according to his ideas, in so low a condition of life. In their prosperous days, they had devoted a part of their salary to him, but in order to make him accept of it, Titian had been obliged to send it in his own name. Now that the Zuccati could no longer assist their father, Titian himself continued the pension, and the grateful sons concealed their misery through fear of trespassing upon his generosity.

Happily, Tintoretto still watched over them, though he himself was at this time much embarrassed.

Art seemed to have fallen into discredit. The brotherhoods paid their *ex voto* at as little expense as possible, and it was even proposed to dispose of all the pictures in the schools, and give the proceeds to the poor workmen of the Corporations. The partricians concealed their luxury in the seclusion of their palaces, that they might not be rendered liable to too heavy taxes for the relief of the poor. Nevertheless, Tintoretto still found means to benefit his unfortunate friends. Unknown to them, he procured the disposal of many of the ornaments they made, and did not cease importuning the Senate to give them employment. At last he succeeded in proving the necessity for farther reparations of the Cathedral. A certain number of the ancient Byzantine mosaics (those which are still seen in St. Mark's) were capable of being preserved, but it was necessary to remove them entirely, and replace them upon new cement. Many parts were quite irreparable, and must be replaced by new compositions, before the whole was quite destroyed, which would have occasioned far greater expense. The Senate decided upon the reparations, and voted supplies for their accomplishment; but also decided upon reducing the number of Mosaic workers, and that in future, to put a stop to all rivalry, there should be but one chief and one school. The Chief of the schools was to be he, whom after a trial of all the workmen before employed, the Commission of Painters should declare to be the most skilful, and his school was to be formed, not from his own choice, according to his or his family's interests, but according to the degree of talent displayed by the other competitors for the prize. There was to be a principal prize, a second prize, and four accessory prizes, and the number of masters was limited to six.

The commission was named, and consisted of the same painters who had examined the productions of the Zuccati and the Bianchini. The competition was open, and the proposed subject was a Mosaic picture, representing St. Jerome. At the same time that Tintoretto carried this happy news to the Zuccati, he was also the bearer of the hundred ducats which were due to them for their year's labour, which he had at last succeeded in obtaining. This unexpected victory over a destiny so sad and terrible, revived the expiring energy of both Francesco and Bozza, but in a widely different manner, for whilst Francesco embraced his brother and his beloved apprentices, Bozza, uttering a sharp savage cry of joy, like that of the sea eagle, darted out of the workshop, and did not reappear. His first action was to run to the Bianchini, and to explain to them their respective situations. Bozza felt hatred and contempt for the Bianchini, but he felt that he could make use of them. It was evident to him that either from partiality or justice, the productions of Francesco and his pupils would be esteemed the first at the examination. The Bianchini were mere workmen, and certainly would only be admitted to work under orders in the future undertakings of the Senate. Besides, Bozza knew that the state of langour and illness of Francesco, would not permit him to labour. He imagined that Valerio would himself produce the two compositions ordered from the Zuccati, that even the apprentices must assist in them, for the time allowed was short, and the Commission wished to judge of the promptitude as well as the knowledge of the competitors. He flattered himself in the depths of his soul, that he could contend against their whole school. During his last stay at San Filippo, he had studied design attentively, and sought to learn all the secrets of colour and outline, which Valerio had of his own accord naively and generously communicated.

Although hoping to surpass the Zuccati, Bozza was not blind to the difficulty of supplanting Francesco, whose name was already illustrious, whilst his was yet unknown. To displace him, it was necessary that the Procurators should be able to intimidate the painters by the intrigues and menaces of Melchoir. At present they were favourable to the Bianchini, who had grossly flattered them, by declaring that they knew much more about painting and mosaic than Titian or Tintoretto. Resolved to struggle against the talent of the Zuccati, Bozza had now only to make the Bianchini favourable to him. He did it by showing them that they could not do without him, because they were absolutely ignorant of the rules of drawing, and that their works would infallibly be dismissed from the competition, if they did not yield their superintendence to him. This insolent pretension did not wound the Bianchini as much as Bozza expected. Money was even dearer to them than praise, and the coldness of the painters towards them, at the last examination, had given them great fears for the future. They therefore accepted Bozza's offer, and even consented to advance him ten ducats. With the half of this sum, he immediately ran to purchase a handsome chain, which he sent to the Zuccati, and which Francesco threw round his brother's neck, without knowing from whom it came.

On all sides work went on with ardour. But Francesco, reanimated for an instant by hope, reckoned too much upon his strength, and again overcome by fever, after a few days was obliged to interrupt his own work, and superintend from his bed the labours of his school.

CHAPTER XXII.

This relapse caused such deep mortification to Valerio that he felt compelled to abandon his work, and withdraw from the competition. Francesco's state was alarming, and the anguish he felt at the sight of his interrupted *chef d'œuvre* augmented his physical sufferings. These were increased when Ceccato's wife thoughtlessly told him one day, that she had seen Bozza in the Bianchini's workshop. This trait of ingratitude seemed to him so black that he wept with indignation, and suffered a fresh attack of fever. Valerio, seeing him so tormented, pretended that Nina must have been mistaken, and that he would himself go to make it sure. He could scarcely believe in so much insensibility on the part of one, with whom, after so many grievances, he had shared his last resources. He ran to San Fantino, where the Bianchini's workshop was situated, and saw through the half-opened door, Bozza, occupied in directing the young Antonio. He sent for him, and having drawn him to some distance, warmly reproached him with his conduct.

"When I saw you so hastily depart the other day," said he, "I well understood that at the first hope of personal success, your old friends would become strangers; in that I recognized the egotism of the artist, and my brother endeavoured to excuse it by saying that glory is a passion so imperious, that all is hushed before it; but between egotism and malice, between ingratitude and perfidy, there is a distance I did not expect you would have overstepped so lightly. Honour to you, Bartolomeo, you have given me a striking lesson, and have made me doubt the sacred power of benefits."

"Speak not of benefits, Messer," replied Bozza in a dry tone, "I have accepted none. You succoured me in the hopes of my being useful to you. For myself I did not wish to be useful to you, and I have paid you for your services by a gift, the value of which far surpasses the expenses which you have incurred for me."

Speaking thus, Bozza looked and pointed at the chain Valerio wore around his neck. No sooner did Valerio understand what he meant, than he tore it off so violently that it broke in several pieces.

"Is it possible," cried he, repressing tears of mingled sorrow and anger, "is it possible that you have had the audacity to send me a present?"

"It is a thing done every day," replied Bozza. "I do not deny the civility you have shewn in receiving me, and I am even obliged to you for not having felt any anxiety as to the advances you have made for my nourishment."

"Thus," said Valerio, clasping the chain in his trembling hand, and fixing on Bozza eyes which sparkled with fury, "you took my workshop for a tavern, and you thought that I kept open table on speculation? It is thus you appreciate my sacrifices, my devotion to unfortunate brethren! Even, when to give you time to work, I myself prepared your dinner, you took me for your cook!"

"I had no such ideas," replied Bozza coldly, "I thought you wished to bind an artist whom you thought not without talent; and to free myself by rewarding you, I have sent you a gift. Is not that the custom?"

At these words Valerio, exasperated, threw the chain violently in his face. Bozza was struck near the eye, and the blood flowed.

"You will answer to me for this insult," said he coolly, "if I restrain myself here, it is because one word from me would send ten poniards to your heart. We shall meet again, I hope?"

"Doubt it not," replied Valerio.

And they parted.

Returning home, Valerio met Tintoretto, and related to him all that had just occurred. He also told him of Francesco's relapse. The master was sincerely grieved, but seeing that Valerio was thoroughly discouraged, he took care not to give him that vulgar consolation which only embitters mortification, in ardent spirits. On the contrary he affected to share his fears for the future, and to regard Bozza as quite capable of surpassing him in the competition, and also of so well superintending the Bianchini's school, that it would carry away the prize from the Zuccati.

"That is indeed sad to think of," added he. "These are men who know nothing in fact of art, but thanks to a young man who knew nothing of it likewise a short time since, thanks to the perseverance and assiduity which often serve instead of genius, the finest talents will perhaps be obliged to seek the shade, whilst ignorance, or at any rate, bad taste, will sway the sceptre. Adieu to art! behold the days of its decline are at hand."

"The evil is perhaps not unavoidable, my dear master," exclaimed Valerio, stimulated, by this feigned depression. "Thank God, the trial is not come yet, and Bozza has not yet produced his *chef d' œuvre.*"

"I will not conceal from you," replied Tintoretto, "that his commencement is very fine; I glanced at it yesterday, when passing San Fantino, and I was surprised, for I did not think Bozza capable of such a design. His pupil, young Antonio, is full of talent, and besides, Bartolomeo retouches his attempt so minutely that he will not leave a fault. He also directs the other two, and the Bianchini are such servile copyists, that with a good master they are capable of designing well, by the mere instinct of imitation, without any knowledge of drawing."

"But, master," said Valerio, anxiously, "you would not give the prize to charlatans, to the injury of the true servants of art? Neither would Messer Titian?"

"My son, in this contest, we are not called upon to judge men, but their productions, and for more security, it is probable that the names will be out of the question. Besides, you are aware that it is customary to give judgment without seeing the signature of any work. An officer covers the name with paper, before submitting the picture to us. This custom is a symbol of the impartiality by which our judgments ought to be dictated. If Bozza surpasses you, my heart will bleed, but my lips will declare the truth. If the Bianchini triumph, I shall think that imposture wins the day over fidelity, vice over virtue; but I am not the Inquisitor, and I have only to judge whether portions of enamel be more or less well arranged in a frame-work."

"I know that well, master," replied Valerio a little piqued, "but why do you think that the school of the Zuccati will not force you to accord the palm to them? Such at least is their intention. Who asks for a culpable partiality? We would not wish it, even supposing we could obtain it from you."

"You appear to me so much discouraged, my poor Valerio, and you have such an enormous undertaking to accomplish, if Francesco's health be not shortly re-established, that in truth I am alarmed at the position in which you are placed. Besides Francesco being ill, does your school still exist? You are a skilful master, you are endowed with a marvellous facility, and inspiration seems to hover round you. But have you not always turned your back on glory? Are you not insensible to the applause of a crowd? Do not you prefer the seductions of pleasure, or the *dolce far niente* to titles, iches, and honours? You are a man admirably gifted, my young master. Your intelligence can overcome all things, but it must not be concealed that you are not an artist. You disdain the strife, you despise the stake, you are too disinterested even to descend into the arena. Bozza, with but the hundredth part of your genius, will sooner gain all by ambition, by perseverance, and by his very hardness of heart."

"You are perhaps right, master," said Valerio, who had listened to this discourse with a thoughtful air. "I thank you for having expressed your fears to me; they are the effects of your kind solicitude, and I think they are too well founded. Nevertheless, master, we shall see! Adieu."

Speaking thus, Valerio, according to the custom of the time and country, kissed the hand of the illustrious master, and with light steps crossed the Rialto.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Valerio upset everything on returning to his studio. He walked with energy, spoke loudly, hummed the chorus of a drinking song in rather a gloomy tone, said harsh things in a tender manner, broke his tools, ridiculed his pupils, and approaching his brother's couch, he embraced him passionately, saying, with an air half crazy, half inspired, "Be easy, Checo, you will soon be well, you shall have the first prize, we will produce a *chef d'œuvre* at the competition; come, come, nothing is lost, the muse has not yet flown back to her native heaven."

Francesco looked at him astonished.

"What is the matter with you?" said he, "you speak strangely. What has happened? Have you quarrelled with any one? Have you met the Bianchini?"

"Explain yourself, master, tell us what has passed," added Marini. "If I may believe some reports, I could not help hearing this morning, Bozza's picture is already far advanced, and it is said will prove a *chef d'œuvre*; this is what torments you, master; but re-assure yourself, our efforts . . . ."

"Tormented, I!" cried Valerio, "and how long pray have I been accustomed to torment myself when one of my pupils distinguished himself. At what period of my life have you ever seen me disquieted or afflicted by the success or triumph of an artist? Really! I! I am envious! I! is it so?"

"Wherefore this sensitiveness my good master?" said Ceccato. "Which of us ever had such an idea? But tell us, we beg you, whether it be true, that Bozza has outlined an admirable composition?"

"Undoubtedly," said Valerio, smiling, and suddenly resuming his ordinary gaiety and gentleness, "he ought to be able to do it, for I have given him sufficiently good rules. Well, what makes you all look so mournful? What is the matter now? One would think you were so many willows drooping over a dried up fountain! Let me see, what can be the matter? Has Nina forgotten the dinner? Has the Procurator-Cashier dictated a new barbarism? Come, my children, to work! there is not a day to be lost, nay, not even an hour, quick, quick, the tools! the enamels! the boxes! and let every one surpass himself, for Bozza is doing great things, and we must do greater still!"

From this moment joy and activity returned to the little workshop of San Filippo. Francesco seemed to return to life by seeing in all these friendly faces, the gleam of hope and sacred joy, which had already produced the master pieces of the cupola of St. Mark. Doubt had for a moment oppressed these young heads, like a leaden dome weighing upon laughing Caryatides; but Valerio had chased it away with a single pleasantry. The intense energy of his will was concentrated within himself, and was only manifested by an overflowing gaiety. But an important change had taken place in Valerio, he was no longer the same man. Although not infected by the spirit of vanity, although not become one of those jealous minds who cannot endure the glory or triumph of another, yet he had become religiously devoted to his profession; his character had become serious, under an appearance of gaiety. Misfortune had wounded him in the most sensitive part of his soul, by affecting those dearest to him, and proving to him by severe lessons, the advantages of prudence. He had just learned the reason of the state of poverty in which Francesco was left after his trial, notwithstanding the economy and regularity of his life. When Valerio discovered in his brother's coffer, the acquittances of all his own creditors, he wept like the prodigal son. Great souls have often great defects, but they conquer them, and by this they are distinguished from the vulgar herd. Valerio, after this time, however rich, never departed from the rules of moderation and simplicity he now, in the depths of his heart, imposed upon himself. He never even mentioned this discovery nor his resolution to any one; but his gratitude to Francesco was proved by the devotion of his whole life, and his firmness of purpose by a morality proof against every temptation.

Serene joy, cheerful industry, songs and laughter, again woke the sleeping echoes of the little workshop. The winter was very severe, but there was no want of wood, and every one had a handsome robe made of cloth, trimmed with zibeline, and a warm velvet doublet. Francesco's strength increased as though by magic. Nina recovered her health and beauty, and became pregnant with a second infant, the expectation of which consoled her for the loss of her first-born. The child who had survived the pestilence grew wonderfully, and the little Marietta Robusti, his godmother, often came to play with him in the workshop of the Zuccati. This charming girl showed a *naive* interest in the labours of her youthful friends, and already showed great capabilities of appreciating their merits.

The eventful day at last arrived, and all the pictures were carried into the sacristy of St. Mark, where the examining committee were assembled. San Sovino had been joined to the artists previously named.

Valerio had done his utmost, and a lively hope reigned in his bosom. He went to the competition with that noble confidence which does not exclude the truest modesty. He loved art for itself, he was happy in having done justice to his own conceptions, and no human injustice could deprive him of this innocent satisfaction. Francesco was visibly agitated, but without false shame, hatred, or jealousy. His pale, but beautiful countenance, his delicate and trembling lips, his bearing, at once timid and proud, deeply interested all the members of the Commission. All desired to award the prize to him, but their attention was diverted by the appearance of a man so worn, so painfully agitated, so convulsively bent, whilst paying his salutations, half fearfully, half insolently, that they were at first startled, as one often is by the aspect of a madman. Soon, however, Bozza recovered his *sang-froid*, and assumed a more becoming manner, but he felt every moment ready to swoon.

The mosaists waited in an adjoining room, whilst the painters proceeded to the examination of their productions. After an hour's time, which to Bozza seemed an age, they were summoned, and Tintoretto, stepping forward to meet them, begged them to seat themselves in silence. The silence was not difficult to obtain. His austere countenance gave no hint of that which each one longed so ardently to discover. All felt oppressed, respired with difficulty, and their hearts beat violently. When seated in their appointed place, Titian, as chief of the Commision, placing himself near the pictures, which were ranged in a line upon the wall, read the following formula, with a firm and sonorous voice:

"We, Vecelli, surnamed Titian, Jacopo Robusti, surnamed Tintoretto, Jacopo Sansovino, Jacopo Pistoja, Andrea Schiavone, Paolo Veronese, all masters in painting, acknowledged by the Senate, and the honourable and fraternal Corporation of Painters, commissioned by the glorious Republic of Venice, and nominated by the venerable Council of Ten to the functions of judges of the works presented at this competition; with the help of God, the light of reason, and integrity of heart, have examined attentively, conscientiously, and impartially, the said productions, and have unanimously declared alone worthy of being promoted to the chief mastership and direction of all the under-mentioned masters, the author of the picture upon which we have inscribed No. I., with the Seal of the Commission. This picture, of the name of whose author we are entirely ignorant, faithful to our oath of not reading the signatures before we pronounce our opinion as to the respective merits, will now be displayed to your eyes and to ours."

At the same moment, Tintoretto withdrew the veil which covered the picture, and took away the band which concealed the signature. A cry of joy escaped Francesco. The successful picture was his brother's. Valerio, who had never in his wildest hopes, expected more than the second prize, was dumb with surprise, and only yielded to his own delight when he witnessed the transport of his brother.

The second picture crowned was that of Francesco, and the third that of Bozza. But when Tintoretto, who pitied his anguish, and imagined he should confer great joy upon him, turned round, expecting to see him, like the others, rise and uncover himself, he was forced to summon him three times. Bozza remained motionless, his arms crossed on his breast, leaning against the wall, and his head sunk upon his bosom. The third prize was too far below his ambition. His teeth were so firmly closed, and his limbs so contracted, that he was obliged to be almost carried away after the competition. The last prizes were given to Ceccato, Gian Antonio Bianchini, and Marini. The two other Bianchini failed, but the Republic afterwards employed them when it became evident that the number of master mosaists had been too much limited. But their tasks were assigned to them in establishments where they were no longer in contact or rivalship with the Zuccati, and thenceforward their hatred became utterly powerless.

CHAPTER XXIV.

After the conclusion of the sitting, Titian exhorted the young laureates, not to fancy that they had arrived at perfection, but to study long and faithfully the models of the old masters, and the cartoons of the painters. "It is in vain," said he, "that at the sight of brilliant fragments, skilfully put together, and bearing a coarse resemblance to objects of worship, the vulgar crowd bow down and adore; it is in vain that prejudiced people deny that mosaic is capable of attaining to the beauty of design of fresco painting; let those amongst you who feel by what different sentiments they have merited our suffrages, and surpassed their competitors, persevere in the love of virtue and the study of nature; and let those who have committed the error of working without any rule and settled conviction profit by their defeat, and give themselves sincerely up to study. It is never too late to abjure a false system, and to make up for lost time."

He then entered into a detailed examination of all the productions submitted to the Commission, and fully explained their beauties and defects. He particularly dwelt on Bozza's errors, after having bestowed great praise upon the fine portions of his picture. He found fault with his Saint Jerome for the ungraceful character of the outlines, and a certain hardness of expression, more fitted for a Pagan warrior than a Christian saint, a conventional style of colouring, utterly devoid of vitality, and a cold, almost a contemptuous expression. "It is a fine figure," said he, "but it is not St. Jerome."

Titian also spoke of the Bianchini, and endeavoured to soften the bitterness of their utter failure by praising their work in a certain point of view. As it was his custom always to mix more honey than wormwood in his discourse, after praising the manual part of their work he endeavoured also to say something favourable of the design, but in the midst of a compliment he was interrupted by Tintoretto, who pronounced these words, still preserved in the record: "I have pronounced no judgment as to these figures, nor as to their goodness because I have not been ordered so to do."

After this memorable morning, Titian gave a great dinner to all the painters of the Commission, and to all the crowned Mosaists. The little Marietta appeared dressed as a sybil, and Titian sketched from her, that evening, his design for the head of the infant virgin, in the fine picture which is still to be seen in the Museum at Venice. Bozza did not make his appearance.

The repast was magnificent. They drank joyously the health of the laureates. Titian observed with utter astonishment the countenance and manners of Francesco. He could not understand fraternal affection so tender, so devoted; such a total absence of jealousy in an artist; he was quite aware that Francesco was not without ambition; but Francesco's heart was yet greater than his genius. Valerio was in ecstacy at his brother's joy. At times he was so overcome by it, that he became sad. At desert, Marietta Robusti proposed Titian's health, and soon after, Francesco, rising, with his cup in his hand, said, with a radiant brow, "I drink to my master, Valerio Zuccato." The two brothers threw themselves into each other's arms, and mingled their tears. The good priest Alberto, it is said, became a little more than reasonably excited, after tasting only a few drops of the Greek wines which the other guests were drinking by cupsful. He was so gentle and so *naive*, that all his intoxication was expended in an increase of friendship and admiration. Old Zuccato came, towards the end of the dinner, but not in a very good humour. "Many thanks, master," he replied to Titian, who offered him a cup of wine, "how can you wish me to drink on such a day as this?"

"Is it not the finest day of your life, my old friend?" replied Titian, "and is not that reason enough for emptying a flagon of Samos with your friends?"

"No master," replied the old man, "this day is not fine for me. It binds my sons to an ignoble trade forever, and condemns two geniuses, of the first order, to unworthy labours. Many thanks; I see no great reason for drinking in that." He was, however a little softened when his sons proposed his health; and then the little Marietta came caressingly to play with the silver curls of his beard, entreating, for what she termed, her husband's pardon.

"Eh! my pretty one," said Zuccato, "does that pleasantry still last?"

"It lasts so well that I am anxious to have the betrothment feast as soon as possible," replied Tintoretto smiling.

History does not say whether this feast ever took place, nor whether Valerio Zuccato married Marietta Robusti. However, we may believe, that they remained intimate, and that the two families formed thenceforward, but one. Francesco wished in vain to abdicate his authority in virtue of the rights of his brother, whose perseverance compelled him to re-assume the station of first master; so that Valerio's title remained purely honorary.

The school of the Zuccati again became flourishing and joyous; nothing was altered except that Valerio led a regular life, and that Gian Antonio Bianchini, induced by good examples, and gained by kind behaviour, became a worthy artist in talent and in conduct. Happy days arose from this new horizon, and the Zuccati produced many other *chef d'œuvres*, the details of which would be too long; and besides, my children, you have plenty of leisure to go and admire them yourselves in our cathedrals. The St. Jerome of Bozza, is in the hall of the Treasury, that of Gian Antonio is in the sacristy of St. Mark, that of Zuccato was sent as a present to the Duke of Savoy; I am unable to say what has become of it.

Here finished the Abbe's tale. Many enquiries were made about Bozza. Notwithstanding the great faults of this artist, his great sufferings interested us. "Bozza," replied the Abbe, "could not endure the idea of working under the orders of the Zuccati. The fear of finding them still generous, after all his injuries, was more terrible to him than that of any punishment. He wandered from town to town, working now at Bologna, now at Padua; living on little, and gaining still less. Notwithstanding his great talents, and his diploma, his haughty manners and his gloomy air inspired distrust. He cared little for poverty, but obscurity was the torment of his life. After some years he returned to Venice, and the Zuccati obtained for him the mastership, and employment. Times were altered; the Government had become less strict in its reforms. Bozza might work, but it appeared that Tintoretto could never forget his past conduct with respect to the Zuccati. The inflexible old man, forced to furnish him with cartoons, made him wait for them so long, that a letter of Bozza's still remains, where he complains of being reduced to destitution, by the interminable delays of the master. The Zuccati had nothing of this kind to fear; they could design their own subjects; and besides, they were loved and esteemed by all the masters. They carried the mosaic art to a degree of perfection which has never been equalled. Bozza has left fine works, but he could not conquer his defects, because his soul was incomplete."

Marini and Ceccato appear to have survived the Zuccati, and to have taken their place in the first rank of mastership.

"And now," my friends, added the Abbe, "if you examine the magnificent mosaic panels of the great age of Venetian painting, and if you remember what I showed you the other day, at Torcello, on the fragments of the ancient Byzantine gypsoplastic, you will see that the destiny of this completely oriental art was united with that of painting, until the epoch of the Zuccati; but that later, when left to itself, Mosaic art degenerated, and ended by being entirely lost. Florence seems to have monopolized this art; but she has reduced it to mere decoration. The new chapel of the Medici is remarkable for the richness of the materials employed in its adornment; lapis lazuli, veined with gold, the most precious marbles, ambergris, coral, alabaster, and malachite, are displayed in arabesques and ornaments, designed in very pure taste; but our old pictures, of unalterable colouring, our brilliant enamels, so ingeniously obtained in every desirable shade, by the glass manufacture at Murano, our illustrious master-mosaists, our rich corporations, and our joyous companies—all these exist now only to prove, by their monuments, their ruins or their memories, the splendour of times long passed away."

Day appeared in the horizon; grey sea-gulls rose up in flocks from the marshes of Palestrina, and ploughed in every direction the atmosphere, which was becoming sensibly lighter every moment. The sun rose with a rapidity which was unknown to me; and the beauty of the morning threw me into a kind of ecstacy.

"Behold the only blessing of which the foreigner cannot deprive us," said the Abbe, with a mournful smile; "if a proclamation could prevent the sun from shining radiantly above our cupolas, three police officers would have been sent long ago to order him to keep his smiles and looks of love for the walls of Vienna."

THE ORCO;

A TRADITION

OF THE AUSTRIAN RULE IN VENICE.

THE ORCO;

A VENETIAN TRADITION.

According to our usual custom, we were sitting under the Veranda; the evening was stormy, the sky covered with black clouds, which emitted frequent gleams of lightning. We were all sitting in such melancholy silence, that one would have thought the heaviness of the atmosphere had taken possession of our hearts, and in reality we felt almost tearfully inclined. Beppa, too, usually the gayest of the gay, seemed quite given up to sad thoughts. In vain did the Abbe, who appeared himself to be much oppressed by the sadness of the company, endeavour by all means in his power, to re-animate the spirits of our friend. Neither his questions, sarcasms, nor entreaties, could rouse her from her reverie; her eyes were fixed on the sky, and her fingers strayed at hazard over the chords of her guitar; she seemed to be totally unconscious of anything passing around her, and given up to the plaintive tones of her instrument, and watching the capricious wanderings of the clouds. The good Abbe Panorio, discouraged by the ill success of his efforts, turned to me, saying:

"Come, dear Zorzi, now to try your power over the capricious beauty. There exists between you two, a kind of magnetic sympathy, which is stronger than all my reasonings, and the sound of your voice will often wake her from the most mournful dreams."

"The magnetic sympathy which you notice, my dear Abbe, proceeds from the entire identity of our sentiments. We have, through life, suffered and thought alike, and our mutual knowledge of each other's ideas informs us what exterior circumstances have awakened their power. I will wager that I can divine, if not the exact subject, at least the nature of her reverie."

And turning to Beppa: "Carissima," said I, "to which of our sisters are your sad thoughts dedicated?"

"To the most beautiful," said she, without turning round, "to the noblest, to the most unhappy."

"When died she?" said I, already really interrested for one who occupied so large a space in the memory of my noble-minded friend, and wishing to associate my regrets also with a destiny, of which I imagined I could not be entirely ignorant.

"She died the end of last winter, the same evening on which the masqued ball was given at the Servilio Palace. She had borne many sorrows, she had overcome many dangers, she had passed through terrible emotions without blenching, and she disappeared from our sight, leaving not a trace behind, as though she had been stricken by a thunderbolt. Every one in Venice knew her more or less, but I better than any, for none loved her so much; and in order to understand her, the inspiration of perfect love was necessary. Many do not believe in her death, though she has never re-appeared since the evening I alluded to. They say she has often disappeared before, and may yet return; but I know she will return no more, and that her career is ended. Could I still doubt, I would, but she contrived to inform me of the fatal truth by him who was the unhappy cause of it. And what a death! The greatest sorrow of this age of sorrows! And her life!—what a life! So full of beauty and contrast, so mysterious, so brilliant, so sad, so splendid, so enthusiastic, so austere, so voluptuous, so complete in all points of resemblance with all human things! No! No life and no death have ever resembled hers. She alone, in this prosaic age, has been enabled to suppress all the common realities of life, and to leave nothing but its poetry. Faithful to the old custom of the national aristocracy, she never appeared until dusk; masqued, but without attendants. There is not an inhabitant of the city who has not met her, wandering through the squares or streets, or who has not perceived her gondola stationary in some canal; but no one ever yet saw her leave or enter it; and although no one was left in charge of it, no one ever attempted to rob it. It was painted and equipped just like all other gondolas, and yet every one recognized it, even the children all knew 'the gondola of the Masque.' As to its destinations, or where its mistress came from in the evening, or returned at morning, no one could even form a conjecture."

The Custom-house officers often saw a black shadow gliding through the Lagunes, and mistaking it for a smuggler's bark, pursued it into the open sea; but when daylight broke, nothing offered itself to their view, which resembled the object of their pursuit, and at last they became so accustomed to its appearance, that they contented themselves with saying: "There is the gondola of the masque again." Every night this mysterious masque traversed the town, seeking no one knew what. Now it was seen in the large open squares, then in the obscurest streets, now on the bridges, then under the piazzes of the noblest palaces, in the most frequented, and in the most desert places. Sometimes its pace was slow, sometimes fast; it went—it came—apparently heedless alike of crowds or solitude. It never stopped. It appeared to contemplate with an impassioned admiration, the houses, the monuments, the canal, and the blue sky, and even to inhale the very atmosphere with delight. When the Masque recognized a friend, it signed to him to follow, and both disappeared. Many a time has it led me apart from the crowd, and seeking some sequestered place, we have conversed on subjects interesting to us both. I always followed with confidence, because of our friendship; but many to whom it gave the sign of invitation, did not dare to accept it. Strange reports were afloat, and cooled the courage of the most intrepid. It was whispered that many young men, believing that they had discovered a lovely face and figure under the masque and black robe, had become enamoured of her, as much from the singularity and mystery of her proceedings, as from her imagined beauty, and that, having been so imprudent as to follow her, from that moment they had disappeared. The police, having remarked that these young people were all Austrians, directed all their energies to learn their fate, and to seize the alledged cause of their disappearance,

But they had no better fortune than the custom-house officers ; the young foreigners never re-appeared, nor could they ever lay their hands on the Masque. A strange adventure too, which happened at this time, still further discouraged the most daring officers of the Viennese inquisition. Seeing that it wus impossible to apprehend the Masque at night, two of the most zealous officers resolved to wait till she rejoined her gondola, to seize her then. One evening, when they saw it fastened at the Quay of the Esclavons, they went down and concealed themselves in it. They remained all night without seeing any one, but an hour before daybreak they thought they felt the bark detached. They rose silently, and prepared as they thought, to seize upon their prey, but on the instant a terrible blow or shock made both the gondola and the unlucky Austrian police officers lose their equilibrium. One was drowned, and the other only saved by the immediate assistance rendered by some smugglers. The next morning nothing was to be seen of the gondola, and the police would have imagined it had sunk for ever, but that the very next evening it was fastened at the same place, in precisely the same state. At last a superstitious terror seized all the myrmidons of the law, and none were willing again to tempt the adventure. The Masque was no further interfered with, and went and came as heretofore.

At the beginning of last autumn, a young Austrian officer, named Franz Lichtenstein, joined the garrison here. He was a young man, of an impassioned and enthusiastic character, and the germ of all noble and grand sentiments existed in his soul as if by instinct. Notwithstanding his bad political education as an aristocrat, he had kept his mind free from prejudice, and had a heartfelt enthusiasm for liberty. His position prevented him from expressing this openly, but as soon as his public duties were finished, he discarded his uniform, which in his mind was indissolubly connected with the crimes of the government he served, and hastened to seek those friends in the city who had been attracted by his talents and virtue, with whom to interchange his thoughts and sympathies. We were always delighted to hear him speak of Venice. He gazed on her with the eye of an artist, mourned over her degradation, and worshipped her almost with a Venetian's love. He was never tired of wandering through the city, and expatiating on her beauties. His pride seemed to be knowing her better than those who claimed her as their native land.

In his nocturnal wandering he had encountered the Masque, and at first he had not paid much attention to it, until he noticed that it seemed actuated by the same curiosity and feelings as himself, and this strange coincidence was remarked upon by him to several persons. He was reminded of the mysterious dangers surrounding the veiled stranger, and advised to be on his guard. But brave, even to temerity, these warnings, instead of startling him, only inspired him with an ardent wish to become acquainted with the inscrutable personage who had produced so strong an impression upon the general mind. Wishing to preserve his incognito as carefully as the Masque preserved hers, he dressed himself as one of middle rank, and thus pursued his nocturnal excursions. He was not long in meeting the object of his search; one fine moonlight night he saw the Masque standing before the beautiful church of St. John and St. Paul. She seemed to be contemplating with extreme admiration the beautiful ornaments of the Portal. The Count approached with slow and silent steps; she did not seem to hear him, and did not move from her position. Having waited a moment or two in order to see if he were discovered, he now approached nearer. He heard a deep sigh, and then she sang, but in so low a tone that he could not distinguish the words; but after a moment's attention he recognized the patois of a popular air, which he had often heard sung in the streets. Being himself a good musician, and endowed with an excellent memory, he even joined in the melody; but instead of stopping, as he had feared, the Masque continued her song, and their voices rose into the air in beautiful harmony together. When the song was ended, Franz, who did not understand the Venitian dialect, but was thoroughly conversant with Italian, spoke to her in pure Tuscan.

"Honour to those," said he, "honour and happiness to those who love Venice."

"Who art thou?" said the Masque, in a full sonorous voice, which, however, fell upon the ear like that of a nightingale.

"An idolator of Beauty."

"Art thou of those, whose brutal love would enslave free Beauty, or one, who, kneeling before her, captive and in sorrow, would join thy tears to hers?"

"When the bird of night sees his bosom's rose giving forth her beauty to the evening breeze, he sings in the fulness of his joy; when he sees her fading under the withering breath of the storm-cloud, he hides his head and mourns. So does my soul for Venice."

"Follow me, then; thou art one of my elect." And seizing the young man's hand, she drew him towards the church. When he felt the cold hand of the unknown touch his, and saw that she directed her steps towards the gloomy church, the sinister histories he had heard involuntarily recurred to his mind, and, seized with a momentary terror, he stopped short. The masqued figure turned round, and fixing a scrutinizing glance upon him said,

"Thou art afraid! Adieu."

Then dropping his hand, she was moving hastily away, when Franz, repenting of his hesitation, sprang forward, and catching hold of her hand, again, exclaimed:

"No! I am not afraid. Let us go on."

She continued her route without replying; but instead of going towards the church, as at the first she seemed inclined, she dived into one of the little streets which led from the square. The moon was now clouded, and the greatest obscurity reigned in the city. Franz could scarcely see where he placed his feet, and could distinguish nothing in the dark shadows which surrounded him. From time to time, a few gleams of light served to show him the banks of a canal, a bridge, a vault, or some unknown portions of a labyrinth of obscure and winding streets, and then all was dark again. He soon discovered that he was a total stranger to this part of Venice, and quite at the mercy of his guide. But resolved to brave everything, he testified no disquietude, and followed his conductress without making a single observation. After a long hour's walk, the masqued figure stopped.

"It is well," said she, "you have a brave heart; had you shown the least sign of fear, this meeting would have been our last; but you have been imperturbable, and I am satisfied. To-morrow, again, we will meet opposite the church of St. John and

St. Paul at eleven o'clock.—Do not endeavour to follow me, it would be useless. Go down this little street to the right, and you will find yourself in St. Mark's Place. Au revoir."

She pressed his hand warmly, and disappeared before he had time to reply. The Count remained motionless for some minutes, astonished at all that had happened, and undecided what course to pursue. But after reflecting on the small chance he had of tracing this mysterious person, and the risk he should run of losing himself in the pursuit, he determined to return home; and following her directions, in a few minutes he found himself in St. Mark's square, and soon regained his hotel.

The next day he was punctual to the rendezvous. He reached the square just as the clock struck eleven; and saw the Masque waiting for him on the steps of the church-door.

"It is well," said she, "thou art exact—let us enter."

She turned abruptly towards the church. Franz, who saw the door was closed, and knew that it was never open at night, thought she must be mad. But what was his surprise in seeing the door yield to the first effort. He followed his guide mechanically, who, as soon as he had entered, shut the door upon them. They were in darkness; but Franz recollecting that the inner door, which separated them from the nave, had no lock, felt no uneasiness, and was preparing to push it open. But she stopped him, saying abruptly—

"Have you ever been in this church before?"

"Twenty times," replied he, "and know it as well as the architect himself."

"Say rather you think you know it, for in truth you are quite ignorant of it. Now enter."

Franz pushed open the door, and entered the body of the church. It was brilliantly illuminated, though completely deserted.

"What ceremony is to be celebrated to-night?" said Franz, stupified with astonishment.

"None; the church expected me. Follow me."

The Count endeavored in vain to understand the sense of the words which the Masque addressed to him, but yielding to the mystery of the moment, he followed obediently. She led him towards the middle of the church, and made him remark, comprehend, and admire the general disposition of its parts. Then passing to details, she explained the construction of the nave, the columns, the chapels, the alters, the statues, the pictures, the ornaments, showed him the design of each part, explained the idea concealed in each device, and proceeding from each detail to the beautiful whole, she made him as it were enter into the very mind and spirit of the architect. Franz listened with a religious attention to every word that fell from the eloquent lips, which seemed to take a pleasure in enlightening him, and every moment felt more and more how little he had previously understood even that which to him had appeared easy of comprehension. By the time she had finished, the pale light of morning was dimming the lustre of the wax-tapers. Although she had spoken for hours, and had not rested all the time, neither her voice nor gestures showed a symptom of fatigue. But her head was sunk upon her bosom, which heaved violently, and the sighs which it breathed forth might be distinctly heard. Suddenly she raised her head, and uplifting her arms to heaven, exclaimed:

"Oh! Servitude, Servitude!"

Tears dropping from beneath her masque, fell upon her black robe.

"Why do you weep?" exclaimed Franz, approaching her.

"To-morrow," she replied, "at midnight, before the Arsenal."

And she went out by the side-door on the left, which closed heavily after her. At the same moment the *Angelus* sounded, and Franz, startled by the unexpected sound of the clock, turned round and saw that all the tapers were extinct. He remained for some time almost immoveable with surprise; he then left the church by the principal door which the sacristans had just opened, and went slowly home, endeavouring to divine who this woman might be who was so bold, so artistical, so powerful, and yet so full of fascination in her manner, and dignity in her deportment.

The next evening at midnight the Count was at the arsenal. There he found the Masque waiting for him, and without speaking, she led the way with great rapidity towards one of the side doors on the right, which she opened by the aid of a golden key, which Franz saw by the moon's light;

the lock yielded without noise, and passing in first, she signed to Franz to follow. He hesitated an instant. To penetrate into the arsenal at night by means of a false key, was to run the risk of being summoned before a council of war, if discovered; and not to be discovered, seemed impossible in a place filled with sentinels. However, seeing her preparing to close the door upon him, he decided to pursue the adventure, and entered. The Masque led him through several courts, then through corridors and galleries, of which she opened all the doors with her golden key, and at last introduced him into vast saloons filled with arms of all kinds and of all nations which had served in the wars of the Republic. These saloons were lighted by lanterns, placed at regular distances between the trophies. She displayed to the Count the most curious and celebrated weapons of all kinds, telling him to whom they had belonged, the combats in which they had been employed, and relating to him in detail the exploits of which they had been the instruments. Thus did she resuscitate before the eyes of Franz the whole history of Venice. After visiting the four saloons dedicated to these uses, she led him into another still more spacious, and lighted in the same manner, where they found variously shaped pieces of wood, the remains of different vessels; and many portions of the last Bucentaur. She explained to her companion the qualities of all the different species of wood, the different construction of the vessels, the purpose for which they had been designed, and the actions in which they had borne their part, and then pointing to the fragments of the Bucentaur—

"Behold," said she in a low sad voice, "behold the remains of our past sovereignty. There lies the wreck of the last vessel which bore the Doge to his Adriatic Bride. Now Venice is a Slave, and the Slave has no bride. Oh! Servitude! Servitude!"

After having pronounced these words, she left the arsenal, but this time she led the Count forth also, who could not without danger have remained there; they returned the same way by which they had entered, without meeting any one. They then fixed on a new place of meeting for the morrow, and separated.

The next day, and each following day she led Franz to all the principal buildings of the town, introducing him everywhere with marvellous facility, explaining everything which came under their notice with an astonishing clearness, and proving herself possessed of immense knowledge and sensibility. He knew not which most to admire, the intellect which appeared to grasp all knowledge, or the heart whose every emotion seemed fraught with tenderness. That, which at first had been but a fantasy, became a deep and real feeling. Curiosity led to his seeking the Masque, and surprise and interest made him continue the adventure. The rendezvous of each succeeding night became an utter necessity to him. Although her words were often grave and often sad, yet Franz found an indescribable fascination attach him to the unknown. He could not close his eyes in sleep, if he had missed the evening's wandering and tearful communion with her. He had felt so profound a respect for her enthusiasm and apparent suffering, that he had never even requested her to remove her masque, or declare her name; for as she had never inquired his, he would have blushed to betray more curiosity than she did; and besides he had a pleasure in hoping to enjoy her confidence as her own gift, rather than as a consequence of his importunity. She seemed to understand the delicacy of his conduct, and to appreciate it, for at each interview she showed him more confidence and sympathy. Though love had never even been mentioned between them, Franz had a secret hope that she divined his passion, and secretly loved him in return. This hope alone was almost sufficient for his present happiness, and when a wish sometimes arose, to know more intimately one who was already the mistress of his soul, his imagination, acted upon by the beautiful mystery which surrounded her, painted her as a creature of such beauty and perfection, that he almost dreaded the time when she would appear to him in her simple womanhood.

One night when they were lingering under the colonnades of St. Mark, the Masque made Franz stop before a picture which represented a girl kneeling before the patron saint of the city.

"What think you of the beauty of that figure?" said she, after allowing him time to examine it.

"That it is," replied Franz, "the most marvellous beauty which it is possible even to conceive. The inspired soul of the artist has produced this divine imagination, but such a face can exist but in heaven alone."

She pressed his hand warmly, and replied, "And on my part, I can imagine nothing more glorious than St. Mark, as he appears in that picture, and only to one who is the earthly image of the saint can my love be given."

Franz trembled and turned pale, as he heard these words, for he recognized the most striking likeness between himself and the saint's picture. He fell on his knees before the unknown, and bathed her hands with his tears, without being able to speak.

"I know now that thou art mine own," said she, in a voice broken by emotion, "and that thou art worthy of knowing and of possessing me,—To-morrow at the ball at the Servilio Palace."

She then quitted him as heretofore, but without pronouncing the so to speak sacramental words with which she had terminated their former interviews. Franz quite wild with joy, wandered all day about the town, utterly unable to stop a moment in any one place. He admired the blue heavens, smiled joyfully at the Lagunes, looked at the houses as with a friendly greeting, and talked to the winds. Every one who met him took him for a fool or a madman, and looked their astonishment. He perceived it, and laughed at their folly, as they laughed at his. When any of his friends asked him what he had done with himself the last month, he could only repeat, "I am going to be happy," and passed on. When the evening came, he purchased a magnificen scarf and new epaulettes, and went in full uniform to the Servilio Palace.

It was a splendid ball. Every one except the officers of the Austrian garrison was disguised, and the variety of different and elegant costumes, combined with the sounds of the full orchestra to form a brilliant and animated scene. Franz strolled through all the apartments, approached every group, and examined every lady. Many were remarkably handsome, but none seemed worthy to stay his wandering looks an instant.

"She is not here yet," said he to himself, "I was sure of it, it is not yet her hour."

He placed himself behind a column near the principal entrance, and waited with his eyes fixed on the portal. Often did the door open and often did lovely women enter, without one quicker movement of his heart. But just as the clock struck eleven, he started and exclaimed, loud enough for those near him to hear: "Behold her!"

All eyes turned towards him, as though to ask the meaning of his exclamation. But the lady who entered soon attracted all eyes and all attention upon herself. Franz recognized her immediately. She was the living image of the maiden in the picture, habited in the costume of the fifteenth century, and her beauty seemed yet more striking from the magnificence of her costume.—She advanced with a slow and majestic step, with perfect self-possession, and without saluting any one; as though she were the queen of the ball. No one seemed to recognize her save Franz, and every one gave way before her, overcome by her dignity, and almost more than mortal beauty. Franz, dazzled and enchanted, followed at a short distance. Just as she arrived in the principal room, a young man in the costume of Tasso, was singing to the accompaniment of a lute, a romance in honour of Venice. She approached him, and looking fixedly at him, asked how he had temerity sufficient, in such a costume, to sing the glories of Venice. Startled by the question, the young man changed colour, and presented his instrument to her. She took it, and running her fingers over the chords, she chanted to its modulations a kind of song, in an irregular and often interrupted rhythm.

"Dance, laugh, and sing, gay children of Venice! For you, winter has no frost, night no darkness, life no cares. You are the fortunate of the earth, and Venice is the Queen of Nations! Who speaks? Who dares to think that Venice is no longer Venice? There are eyes to see, ears to hear, and tongues to tell, and the Council of Ten to dread, if you are not good citizens. Good citizens dance, laugh, and sing, but never speak their thoughts. Then dance, laugh, and sing, children of Venice!"

"Venice, thou who seemest born rather of the spirit, than executed by the hand of man; and created for the passing sojourn of pure souls, as a foretaste on this earth of heaven; walls which yet seem inhabited by spirits, and round which the atmosphere of magic still lingers; colonnades, which in airy lightness seem trembling in the evening air, piercing spires which intermingle in beautiful confusion with the floating masts of ships; angels and saints, who appear just to have alighted on the cupolas to feel the cool sea-breeze; thou city, who seemest not like others to be on the dull and heavy earth, but to float like a swan upon the waters, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice! A new destiny offers itself before you, as glorious as the former. The Black Eagle spreads its wings above the Lion of St. Mark, and Austrian feet dance in the Palace of the Doges! Be silent, ye harmonies of night! Peace, insensate whispers of the Dance! Be no longer heard, hymn of the fisherman; cease to murmur, voice of the Adriatic! Expire, lamp of the Madonna; for ever veil thy splendour, thou silver queen of night! There are no longer Venetians in Venice! Are we dreaming? Is this a festival? Yes, yes, dance, laugh, and sing! It is the hour, when the shade of Faliero slowly descends the Giant's Staircase! and pauses on the last step. Dance, laugh, and sing, for midnight approaches, and the spirits of the departed will sound in our ears: Servitude! Servitude!"

As the last words died upon her lips, she let her lute fall, which sent forth a mournful sound as it fell upon the marble floor; and the clock struck: every one listened to the twelve strokes in a deep silence. Then the master of the house advancing towards the unknown, said in a startled and irritated manner: "Madam, to whom am I indebted for the honour of your presence?"

"To me," exclaimed Franz, "and if it be displeasing, I am here to avouch it!"

The unknown, who had apparently paid no attention to the host's question, turned round on hearing the Count's voice, with a countenance beaming with joy:

"I live," said she, "I shall live;" but perceiving his uniform, she turned pale, her looks became gloomy, and she abruptly said:

"Why have you chosen such a disguise?"

"This is no disguise," answered he, "it is my—" he could say no more, the expression of her countenance terrified him. She looked at him for a short time in silence, and tears fell from her eyes. Franz hastily approached her, but exclaiming in a broken voice, "follow me," she went rapidly through the crowd, and leaving the palace, stepped into her gondola, desiring Franz to follow and seat himself. When he had done so, he cast his eyes round, and perceiving no gondolier, said, "But who will conduct the gondola?"

"I," replied she, seizing the oar.

"Nay, rather let me," said the Count.

"No! Austrian hands can never manage the Venetian oar," and so saying, the gondola glided like an arrow through the Lagune.

They were soon far from the palace. Franz, who was eagerly awaiting the explanation of her sudden anger, was astonished and inquiet at her continued silence.

"Where are we going?" said he, after some moments' reflection.

"Where our destiny leads us," replied she;

and, as though these words had revived her displeasure, she plied her oar with redoubled vigour. The gondola, obedient to her skilful hand, seemed literally to fly over the water. Franz saw the foam glide past with its dazzling spray, and all the boats they met or passed on their passage, were soon left behind, as clouds scattered by the hurricane. The darkness increased, the wind rose, and the young man could hear nothing but the rippling of the wave, and the breeze which lifted his hair; and he could see nothing but the shades of evening, and the white figure of his companion upright on the prow:—her hands on the oar, her hair scattered over her shoulders, and her white robes agitated by the winds, she seemed less like a woman, than the storm-spirit, rejoicing in the troubled waters.

"Where are we?" exclaimed Franz, in an agitated voice.

"Is the Captain afraid?" said she, with a disdainful laugh.

Franz did not reply; he felt that she was right, and that fear was overcoming him. Not being able to conquer it, he resolved at least to conceal it, and to keep silent. But after some time, feeling more and more bewildered, he rose and approached his mysterious companion.

"Be seated, cried she.

Franz, whom his fears rendered desperate, still advanced.

"Be seated!" reiterated she; and perceiving that he came yet nearer, she stamped on the prow so violently with her foot, that the gondola trem bled as though it would be completely overset, and Franz losing his balance, fell senseless on the deck. When he recovered, he saw the unknown weeping at his feet. Touched by her bitter grief, and forgetting what had passed, he raised her in his arms, and seated her by his side; but though she did not resist, her tears continued to flow.

"Why do you weep, dearest?" exclaimed Franz, pressing her to his bosom.

"The Lion, the Lion," said she, pointing to the sky.

Franz looked, and saw the constellation of the Lion shining in solitary splendour in the heavens.

"But why this deep sorrow, beloved?" said he. "The stars can have no real influence over our destiny; and if they have, we can easily find a favourable constellation to watch over our fate. Venus rules the sky as well as the Lion."

"Venus hath set, and the Lion is risen; and look, look," said she, mournfully, and pointing towards the horizon, "Who can resist that which approaches?"

Franz looked where she pointed, and saw a black shadow, which seemed in the distance surrounded by a halo of fire.

"What is that object?" said he in amazement.

"Destiny," replied she; "who advances to seize its victim." "What victim?" sayest thou. "That one which I shall offer. Have you not heard of the young Austrians who have entered my gondola, and never re-appeared?"

"Yes, but that rumor was surely false."

"It is true; I must destroy, or be destroyed.—

Each youth of your country who loves me, and is unloved by me, dies. And whilst I do not love, I live, and I destroy: and when I love, I die. It is my destiny."

"Oh! God, who art thou, then?"

"How it advances! in a moment it will be upon us. Listen, listen."

The dark shadow bore down with inconceivable rapidity, and now appeared as a large vessel. It seemed illuminated with a red flame on all sides, black shadowy figures stood immoveable on the prow, and a vast quantity of oars rose and fell with a measured cadence falling on the ear with a boding sound; hollow voices chaunted the *Dies Iræ*, accompanied by the clanking of chains.

"Oh, life—life!" exclaimed the unknown in despairing accents, "Franz, dost thou not recognize that vessel?"

"Its phantom-like appearance makes my blood run cold, but I do not recognize it."

"It is the Bucentaur. The same which has engulphed all your compatriots. They were all here, sitting in this same seat, at the same hour, near me, in this same gondola. As the vessel approached, a voice demanded, 'Who goes there,' I replied, Austria; then the voice said, 'Dost thou love or hate,' I have replied, I hate; and the voice has said 'Live;' then the Bucentaur has run down the gondola, engulphed your countrymen, and carried me in triumph over the waters."

"And to-day?"—

"Hark, they speak."

A deep mournful voice stilling the funeral noise on board the Bucentaur spoke, and said,

"Who goes there?"

"Austria," replied the trembling accents of the unknown.

A chorus of maledictions broke from the Bucentaur, which was approaching with increasing rapidity; there was then silence again, and the same voice spoke, and said:

"Dost thou love or hate?"

The unknown hesitated a moment, and then, with a voice of thrilling power, she said, "I love."

"Then thy destiny is accomplished.—Thou lovest Austria.—Perish Venice!"

A bitter cry, a sound as of terror and despair, rang through the air, and Franz sank beneath the waves.—When he rose to the surface, he could see nothing, neither the gondola, the Bucentaur, nor his beloved. He at last perceived some feeble lights in the distance, which proved to be the lanterns of the fishermen of Murano; and by vigorous swimming he contrived to reach their island. Alas for Venice!

Beppa finished, the tears again streaming from her eyes. We watched her in silence, not attempting to console her. But suddenly she dried her tears, and turning round with capricious vivacity, said, "Well, what makes you all so sad? Is it the effect fairy tales commonly produce on you? Have you never heard of the *Orco*, the Venetian *Trilby?* Have you never met it of an evening, in the cathedrals or canals? It is a good spirit enough, only doing evil to traitors or oppressors; one might call it the guardian demon of Venice. But the Viceroy, hearing of the perilous adventure of Count Lichtenstein, sent to request the Patriarch to perform a grand exorcism on the Lagunes; and since that time the *Orco* has never re-appeared."

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